

BACKGROUND

By RAINE MARCUS

The first report of what came to be known as the Bar-On Affair was broadcast on Channel 1's *Mabat* news program three months ago by police reporter Ayala Hasson. Roni Bar-On, a relatively unknown criminal lawyer from Jerusalem, she said, had been appointed attorney-general as a result of irregular wheeling and dealing by MK Aryeh Deri, Justice

Minister Tzahi Hanegbi, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu himself.

Deri, according to *Mabat*, wanted Bar-On to be appointed attorney-general so he could reach a plea bargain in his ongoing criminal trial. If Bar-On were not appointed, said Hasson, Deri threatened to lead his Shas Party into opposing the Hebron redeployment agreement, perhaps causing the government to collapse.

Bar-On was appointed, but after a pub-

lic outcry resigned only 48 hours later. Netanyahu vehemently denied all allegations, but ordered a police investigation. Prime Minister's Office Director-General Avigdor Lieberman was also implicated in the affair, as were many others, including businessman and Deri confidant David Appel, allegedly the intermediary between Deri and the Prime Minister's Office.

Internal Security Minister Avigdor

Kahalani said at the time that if there was truth in the allegations, the government should resign. A special police team was set up, headed by national investigations chief Cmdr. Sando Mazar and Dep. Cmdr. Ya'acov Grossman, who conducted a massive probe in which 50 people were summoned to give evidence or questioned under caution.

Among the first to give evidence was Hasson herself, followed by Appel, Deri,

Bar-On, and lawyer Dan Avi-Yitzhak. Avi-Yitzhak had been Deri's trial lawyer, but allegedly wished to become attorney-general (and has vehemently denied any involvement in the affair).

Deri strongly opposed such a candidacy, arguing Avi-Yitzhak could not abandon him in the middle of his complicated trial. A deep rift opened between the two, culminating in Avi-Yitzhak's resignation from the case. Avi-Yitzhak then issued a

letter citing alleged irregularities by Deri in his intervention in appointing Bar-On as attorney-general.

Netanyahu was himself questioned under caution for four hours by police, but was reportedly uncooperative. Lieberman was questioned under caution three times. But the MK who spent the most hours with police was Hanegbi, who at one stage said he was being used as scapegoat by the government.

Anatomy of the affair

Our dear father, grandfather, and father-in-law

Prof. ELI DAVIS

former director of Hadassah,
has passed away.

The funeral will leave today, Wednesday, April 16, 1997, at 3:30 p.m. from the Hadassah-University Medical School, Ein Kerem, Jerusalem for Har Hamenuhot, Givat Shaul.

Daughter: Naomi and Dr. David A. Frenkel and children

Son: Haim and Linda Divon and children

Shiva at Rehov Molcho 9, Jerusalem.



Hadassah Women's Zionist Organization of America
and the Hadassah family in Israel

mourns the death of

Prof. ELI DAVIS ז"ל

former director of the Hadassah Medical Organization,
physician, researcher, teacher, and outstanding manager,
and share in the grief of the family.



Hadassah Medical Organization

mourns the death of

Prof. ELI DAVIS ז"ל

former director of the Hadassah Medical Organization,
a pioneer of Israeli medicine who led Hadassah during
the War of Independence and in the early years of the state,
and shares in the grief of the family.
The funeral will leave today, Wednesday, April 16, 1997 (9 Nisan 5757)
from the plaza of the Hadassah-University Medical School, Ein Kerem,
at 3:30 p.m. for Har Hamenuhot.



Aryeh Deri, leader of the Shas Party, who is being tried in Jerusalem District Court on corruption charges, has been cited as a key figure in the Bar-On Affair. According to police evidence, he is suspected of blackmailing and threatening Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu regarding Bar-On's appointment. Deri was allegedly told that Bar-On is "one of us" and would help him arrange a plea bargain or pardon. If Bar-On was not appointed, he allegedly told Netanyahu, Shas would leave the government. Deri strongly opposed the appointment of his own lawyer Dan Avi-Yitzhak as attorney-general, arguing that he could not abandon him in the middle of his trial. Avi-Yitzhak later resigned as Deri's attorney. Police have recommended Deri's indictment on charges of blackmail and threats.

(Text: Raine Marcus; Photo: Israel Sun)



Tzahi Hanegbi was appointed after justice minister after Ya'acov Ne'eman was forced to resign, then indicted on charges of tampering with evidence and breach of trust. Hanegbi did his internship in Bar-On's law office after completing law school. He was investigated at great length. One of the reasons, he said at the time, was that he insisted on transcribing the whole investigation by hand and thoroughly going over all questions and answers. Hanegbi is suspected of presenting government ministers with false information about Bar-On and of embellishing Bar-On's resume to Supreme Court President Aharon Barak to persuade him that he was right for the job. He has said he does not intend to suspend himself. The police are recommending he be indicted for breach of trust.

(Text: Raine Marcus; Photo: Israel Sun)

Avigdor Lieberman, director-general of the Prime Minister's Office, has consistently slammed Channel 1. He was allegedly the 'pipeline' between Deri and Netanyahu, acting as intermediary for the alleged deal to appoint Bar-On. It is no secret that Lieberman is also livid with Avi-Yitzhak for abandoning Deri. Lieberman, who has been questioned under caution three times, was reportedly uncooperative and aggressive. The police recommendation to indict him for breach of trust is not totally



conclusive, sources said.

(Text: Raine Marcus; Photo: Isaac Harari)

The questioned

Members of the government

1. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (questioned under caution)
2. Finance Minister Dan Meridor
3. Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi (questioned under caution)
4. Labor and Social Affairs Minister Eli Yishai
5. Interior Minister Eli Shuss
6. Communications Minister Limor Livnat
7. Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy
8. Foreign Minister David Levy
9. Ze'ev Begin, former science minister

Prime minister's staff and advisers

10. Avigdor Lieberman, director-general of the Prime Minister's Office (questioned under caution)
11. Danny Navet, cabinet secretary
12. Moshe Leon, director of the Prime Minister's Office
13. David Agmon, former director of the Prime Minister's Office
14. Shai Bazzak, communications adviser
15. Ruhama Avraham, secretary
16. Yitzhak Molcho, legal adviser
17. David Shimon, legal adviser

Members of Knesset

18. Aryeh Deri (questioned under caution)
19. Shaul Yahalom
20. Ehud Olmert
21. Ophir Pines

Members of the legal system

22. Aharon Barak, president of the Supreme Court
23. Michael Ben-Yair, former attorney-general
24. Dror Hotev-Yishai, chairman of the Israel Bar Association
25. Tsevi Tal, former Supreme Court justice
26. Roni Bar-On, former attorney-general
27. Yossi Cohen, head of the Jerusalem Bar
28. Eitan Haberman, legal adviser to the Likud
29. Dan Avi-Yitzhak, attorney-general candidate
30. Dov Weisglass, attorney-general candidate
31. Gilad Bilu, aide to Aryeh Deri
32. Shlomo Deri, brother of Aryeh Deri

Members of the press

33. Ayala Hasson, Channel 1 reporter
34. Rafik Halaby, director of Channel 1's news department
35. Ofer Nimrodi, *Ma'ariv* publisher
36. Ofir Haham, *Ma'ariv* reporter
37. Yoel Nir, Israel Radio reporter
38. Michael Doron, Channel 1 legal reporter
39. Tali Nir, Channel 2 reporter
40. Erez Rotem, former *Ma'ariv* reporter

Political activists

41. David Appel, businessman
42. Yehuda Avidan, former assistant to Aryeh Deri
43. Yisrael Yehoshua, Likud activist in Jerusalem

Spokesmen and aides

44. Etti Eshed, Justice Ministry spokesman
45. Moshe Gorali, courts spokesman
46. Dani Ben-Kochav, friend of Bar-On
47. Rivka Tshakotai, daughter of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef
48. Alon Dankner, businessman and friend of the prime minister
49. Miriam Rubinstein, wife of the attorney-general
50. Yoram Kashi, assistant to Hanegbi

The unveiling of the tombstone
(hakamat matzeva) for

THOMAS D. SPITZER

of Montreal

will take place בצהריים at Har Hamenuhot cemetery,
Har Tamir, on Sunday, April 20, 1997, at 3:00 p.m.

Associated Press

We extend our sincere condolences to
the family on the passing of a friend and colleague

ANDY MEISELS

The Associated Press

We extend our sincere condolences
to the family on the passing of

ANDREW MEISELS

Management and staff
of The Jerusalem Post

In great sorrow we announce the passing of

ANDREW MEISELS

The funeral will take place today,
Wednesday, April 16, at 1 p.m.,
at the Yarkon cemetery.

Daughters: Tami, Ruthie and Judy
Sister: Marianne
Mother: Margot

Shiva at the family's home, 190 Dizengoff, Apt. 10, Tel Aviv.

ERNST HERZ

has passed away in old age

The funeral took place yesterday,
Tuesday, April 15, 1997.

The Family

We extend sincere condolences to
Leo Thurm and family
on the passing of our beloved cousin

SARAH THURM

המקום יתום אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

Yehudit and Matityahu Adler and family



Touro College

extends sincere condolences to
Leo Thurm and family
on the passing of

SARAH THURM

a woman of valor who will be sadly missed by all.

המקום יתום אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

Dr. Bernard Lander, President
Matityahu Adler, Director General
and the entire Touro family

Netanyahu expected to keep Science portfolio

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to tell the cabinet on Friday that he has decided to retain the Science portfolio himself, at least for the time being.

Friday will mark three months' period since Ze'ev Begin resigned the post and, by law, Netanyahu has three months to name a replacement.

Netanyahu's keeping the portfolio himself does not require Knesset

approval, but only an announcement to the cabinet. This will enable Netanyahu to leave all his options open, coalition sources said, including the possibility of a national unity government.

Michal Tadelman

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CONGRATULATIONS ON THE OCCASION
OF BEING ELECTED AS THE HONORARY
PRESIDENT OF THE BABYLONIAN JEWISH
HERITAGE CENTER.

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE FUND
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF
THE JEWISH FAMILY IN THE NAME OF PROF.
YITZHAK HALBRECHT - BEIT HATEFUTSOTH

IN CONTEXT / HERB KEINON

Where is Nahum Manbar?

So far the story seems culled from an early scene in a promising adventure movie: A good looking businessman, with an office on the French Riviera and alleged ties with Iran, disappears for three weeks, and even misses a championship game of the basketball team he sponsors.

Where in the world is Nahum Manbar? "Don't you have anything else to do in Israel except deal with Nahum's well-being?" Manbar's wife Francine asked Ma'ariv's Paris-based reporter.

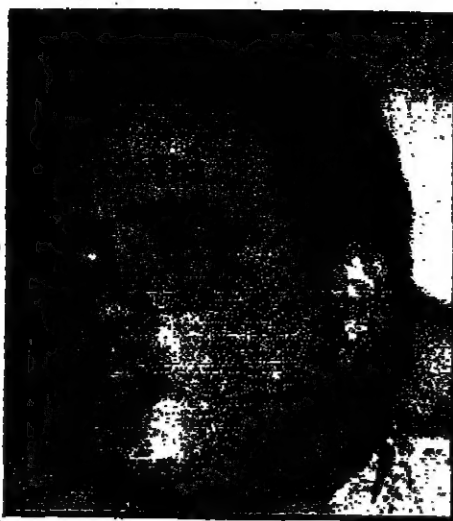
Francine just didn't get it. Israel, judging by the space devoted to Manbar in yesterday's newspapers, is enthralled by stories such as these, similar in genre to tales about ex-commandos now training dictators in central America, or former IDF officers acting as bodyguards for despots in Africa. Home-grown boys made good.

And Manbar is as home grown as they come. Born and raised on Kibbutz Givat Haim Me'uhad, he was an officer in the paratroopers. He left the kibbutz after it would not let him take a leave for university study, and eventually found himself in the shady world of arms sales. He lived for the last several years in France.

In 1991, the Defense Ministry put out directives to stop doing business with Manbar, because of his alleged connections with Iran. The sanctions did not stop at the Mediterranean. In 1994, the US State Department alleged that Manbar violated the trade embargo with Iran by selling it equipment for the manufacture of chemical weapons.

According to Yediot Aharonot, President Bill Clinton sent a letter to Congress informing it, in February 1995, that "the administration determines that one man - Nahum Manbar - and two companies worked to distribute forbidden material for the production of chemical weapons."

The presidential letter was followed by US sanctions, which included being placed on a "black list" of companies with



Nahum Manbar (Moshe Razeksky/Kol HaIr)

which it is forbidden to do business, and Manbar was reportedly barred from entering the US.

An article in The New York Times that month said the sanctions were taken because Manbar had set up fictitious companies in Poland and Britain, through which he sold material for chemical warfare to Iran, some of which came from China. Among the material, according to the paper, were materials used to manufacture mustard and nerve gas.

Manbar, who first appeared on the Israeli sports scene in 1992, when he became financially involved in the Hapoel Tel Aviv basketball team, and later sponsored Hapoel Holon, Elitzur Holon's women's team, and most recently Hapoel Jerusalem, has denied the charges.

In a Ha'aretz magazine interview in 1995, Manbar denied trafficking in chemical weapons, but did admit ties with Iran. "They found me, when I was searching for them," he said. "I must say that the

Iranians with whom I worked - a minister, a deputy minister, and an adviser to the president - were not radical, understood matters, and were definitely not among those whose only goal was to destroy Israel," Manbar said.

Manbar said he supplied arms to the Iranians, including tanks, but not "anything that could endanger Israel. There were no missiles, no airplanes, no unconventional arms."

He said that the Israeli authorities who needed to know about these transactions knew about them, and that he received a Defense Ministry okay for what he exported to Iran.

Manbar said he cut off ties with Iran when it began asking for different weaponry. "At a certain stage, they changed the character of their requests and began asking for fundamentally different things. I refused, and reported this to the proper authorities. They wanted medium-range missiles which could carry chemical warheads. They wanted particular material. They wanted me to build a chemical weapons plant in Iran. All these requests, which appeared suspect to me, I passed on to the proper authorities in Israel, and I am talking about suitcases of documents."

Gerald Steinberg, an authority on Middle East arms sales at Bar-Ilan University's BESA Center, said Manbar is the only Israeli he is aware of who has had arms dealings with the Iranians, with the exception of the governments' involvement during the Iran-Contra Affair of the mid 1980s.

"Who knows," Steinberg said, "Maybe Manbar was the inspiration."

Steinberg downplayed the whole affair, saying it is a "minor issue." Whatever he transferred was old junk.

Manbar said in the Ha'aretz interview that he terminated ties with the Iranians in 1992.

That was the year his interest shifted to Israeli basketball.



Spring is sprung

Sarit Ataya, a physical education student at the Kibbutz Teachers College, pauses to smell the flowers yesterday during an orienteering competition in the JNF Hulda Forest. (Ariel Jerusalemi)

Lederman gets three years for tea attack on Dayan

Yisrael Lederman was sentenced yesterday for deliberately scalding MK Yael Dayan by throwing a cup of hot tea in her face.

Jerusalem Magistrate's Court Judge Yoram Noam also gave Lederman, a Jerusalem resident, a five-month sentence suspended for three years.

The incident occurred last October, when the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women, which Dayan heads, was touring Hebron and stopped at a Jewish kiosk near Machpelah Cave. Lederman approached the MKs, attracted Dayan's attention by offering a cup of tea, then flung the hot drink at her, causing second-degree burns on her neck and chest. Lederman claimed he was

pushed and accidentally spilled the tea, which was disproved by a video film of the incident.

In issuing the sentence, Judge Noam said: "It is necessary to keep [Lederman] under lock and key for a long time in order to protect the public from him." He also said the sentence would serve as a deterrent to others against political violence in general and violence directed against public servants in particular.

Lederman, who was affiliated with the outlawed extremist Kach group, served three years of a 20-year sentence for murdering a Palestinian man in 1978.

Dayan, who was present at the sentencing, said she is satisfied with the sentence and hopes it will act as a deterrent. (Itim)

Sharon: Palestinians trying to buy land in Israel

By DAVID HARRIS

Palestinians and other Arabs are doing their best to purchase property in Israel, via Israeli lawyers, National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon said yesterday.

Speaking to the Knesset Economics Committee, Sharon said planned legislation to prevent real estate purchases by foreigners is specifically aimed at those from hostile countries.

The issue was raised by MK Avraham Poraz (Meretz-Shinui), who expressed his concern that any legislation might seek to exclude Israeli Arabs. "The planned legislation would not be able to do this and in any case, we say we are a democracy, so how can we prevent such purchases?"

"This suggestion was strongly denied by Sharon, who insisted the law would only apply to foreigners."

"But it is a false fear to say that Arabs will buy land here. After all, despite the fears, the Saudis haven't done it yet," said Poraz.

Anyone eligible to live in Israel under the Law of Return would be exempted from the legislation.

"So what happens if a company like GM wants to buy some land here and then build a factory on it, are we going to say: 'I'm sorry but you're not Jewish?'" added Poraz.

Several straw companies have been set up to make the purchases, according to Sharon, who refused to go into details during the meeting which discussing the reform of the Israel Lands Administration, as proposed by the Ronen committee last week. "This is not the appropriate time," he said, but invited Poraz to a private discussion of the issue.

The ILA will not adopt the recommendations of the Ronen committee on land ownership and usage during its board meeting on Sunday, Sharon told the committee.

First, talks will be held on the proposed reforms between his ministry and kibbutz movement representatives and delegates from the Jewish National Fund.

Police must pay \$100,000 tax on witness's fee

By RAINE MARCUS

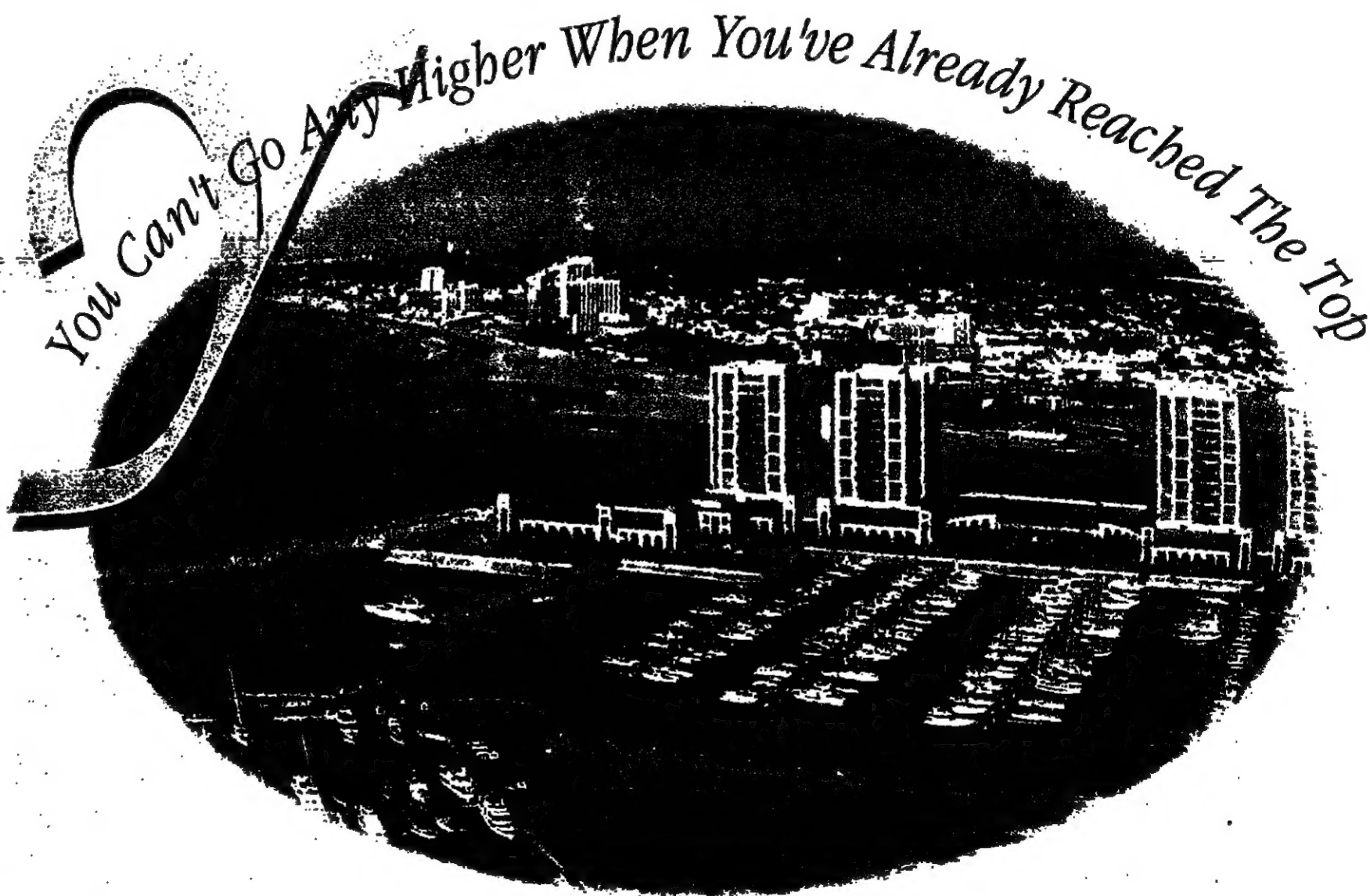
The Israel Police will pay NIS 340,000 to tax authorities on behalf of the most expensive state's witness the country has ever known.

Ya'acov Tsor, the former private investigator who turned state's witness in the media wiretapping case, received a record tax-free \$200,000, payable in shakels in linked monthly installments over a three-year period, which started in February 1995.

According to the state's witness agreement, Tsor was exempt from paying tax on the sum, but the Income Tax Authority did not

agree and began to chase him for their due. Following long discussions among the tax authorities, police brass, and district attorney's office, it was decided the police would pay income tax on Tsor's fee at a rate of 50 percent.

Tsor is also supposed to be exempt from paying VAT on the \$200,000, as well as income tax and VAT on all investigations and wiretapping services he carried out for various companies over the past several years. According to Tsor, the witness deal included income tax and VAT exemption for the undeclared payments he received for these services.



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Psychiatrists: Frail elderly suffer Seder syndrome

By JUDY SIEGEL

Psychiatrists at Jerusalem's Herzog Memorial Hospital have identified a growing phenomenon of anxiety and depression among elderly people before Pessah. Dr. Baruch Shapira, head of the geriatric and psychogeriatric hospital said that during the weeks before Pessah, numerous adult children who have invited their parents to the Seder report emotional problems in their elders.

Among the problems are anxiety over the fact that non-family members who are strange to them have been invited to their children's Seder, depression, and sleep disorders. Some of the elders try to avoid going to the Seder at all.

Shapira, who investigated the phenomenon, said that many elderly are ashamed to appear before their family – and especially strangers – with their physical limitations or disabilities. Since such limitations are natural, Shapira said, children should be patient and aware of the possible cause of their parents' distress, and even forgo inviting outsiders to the Seder.

"As it says in the Bible," Shapira noted, "Honor thy father and thy mother, so that your days will be lengthened."

Meanwhile, Kupat Holim Clalit has opened a special Pessah information line on its Internet site (at www.klalit.co.il or www.toronet.co.il/klalit). Advice is offered on a number of holiday questions, including how to more easily digest matza.

how a sick person can fulfill the commandment of attending a Seder, how a person with back problems can sit through the ceremony, and which medications are kosher for Pessah.

Dieticians from Hadassah-University Hospital and the Israel Dieticians Association warn the public to avoid overeating during the holiday. A single piece of matza has 130 calories (like two slices of bread). One can eat sensibly by not coming to the Seder hungry, minimizing the intake of wine (100 calories a cup), eating diet matza (85 calories), forgoing fattening cake for fruit salad and avoiding heavy gravies. Cookies and cakes with coconut and chocolate are especially ridden with calories.

Pharmacies to come under closer supervision

By JUDY SIEGEL

The Health Ministry will toughen its supervision of pharmacies, especially in the Haifa area, where Kupat Holim Clalit has claimed anabolic steroids are being sold illegally over the counter in pharmacies and given out in body-building gyms.

The ministry yesterday warned the public against using these drugs except under a doctor's instructions and with his prescription.

On Monday, Dr. Yehzekel Shoham of Clalit and colleagues at the Lin, Zevulun and Carmel Hospital clinics claimed that these drugs are being distributed without a prescription by some pharmacies and gyms and taken in overly high doses. While the steroids increase muscle mass in the body, they also have serious side effects and can cause impotence and sterility.

The Clalit doctors reported on seven men (five single and two married), with an average age of 24, who recently came to the urology clinic with complaints in a reduction in sexual function, impotence and a decline in the volume of semen. The married men claimed they were sterile.

After examining and interviewing them, the doctors found low levels of male hormones and very low sperm motility – all due to their having taken anabolic steroids. In most cases, when they stopped taking the steroids and received special medication, their condition returned to normal, but this is not guaranteed.

Since men in their late teens to early 20s are the most likely to want to build muscle mass, they must be educated about the risks of these drugs, Shoham said. "Ironically, drugs that are claimed to make them 'manly' are liable to harm their manliness directly," he said.

Absorption Ministry, Rabbinate reach compromise on burials

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

New immigrants and other individuals who die, and whose Jewishness is in question or who claimed to have no religion, will be buried in special sections in Jewish cemeteries, according to a directive issued yesterday by the Absorption Ministry.

Such special sections have been set up in cemeteries in 16 communities. Information on the arrangement was sent out to burial societies, religious councils, and absorption workers.

Budgets for the special cemetery sections are dependent on the willingness of those running them to also bury individuals who are not from that particular town or area.

If no cemeteries containing special sections exist where the individual dies, the Absorption Ministry will pay the cost of transferring the body, up to a limit of NIS 500.

Burial societies and local religious councils also received updated instructions on how to handle such cases.

The creation of the special cemetery sections is the result of ongoing discussions between Yisrael Ba'aliya leaders and representatives of the Chief Rabbinate, according to an Absorption Ministry spokesman. It grew out of several incidents in recent years in which immigrants were buried outside cemeteries because of questions about their Jewishness.

Absorption Minister Yuli Edelstein said it represented an ongoing effort by his party to reach compromises with the Chief Rabbinate, rather than fight against it.

The communities with special cemetery sections are: Haifa, Upper Nazareth, Kibbutz Kfar Masaryk, Kibbutz Einat, Afula, Arad, Dimona, Sderot, Kiryat Shmona, Beersheba, Karmiel, Kfar Haroeh, Emek Hefer, Gush Etzion, Omer, Ashkelon, and Drom Hasharon.

Cohen warns Hammer over 'religious commissars'

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

MK Ran Cohen (Meretz), the chairman of the Knesset State Control Committee, yesterday warned of "religious commissars" being chosen to oversee state education, when the Authority on Education Towards Values is selected.

Cohen warned Education

Minister Zevulun Hammer against any action that could be interpreted as an attempt to force values which are foreign to those of democracy, human rights, and enlightened government on pupils in the state education system.

Ministry Director-General Benzion Dell promised the committee that the commission is not meant to interfere with the democracy unit, whose budget and activities will not

be affected. He promised that the Shenhar Commission's recommendations regarding studies on Judaism and democracy would be fully implemented.

Meanwhile, the National Council for State Education, in conjunction with the Group for Humanistic State Education, is planning to protest, at 3 p.m. today opposite the Education Ministry, the creation of the authority, which

they say will only be run by representatives of the state-religious stream. They also say it will mean a reduction in the democracy unit's activities and independence, and the sending of 250 women doing national service to teach about Judaism in non-religious schools. The two groups said these moves threatened the free and pluralistic nature of the state non-religious education system.

Andrew Meisels dies at 64

Andrew Meisels, a veteran foreign correspondent, author, and broadcaster, died at his home Monday after a brief illness. He was 64.

Born in Budapest, Meisels immigrated with his family to the United States in 1939, settled in New York, and studied at City College of New York, where he was also a member of the Reserve Officers Training Corps and won a commission as a reserve officer in the US Army.

He began his career in journalism as a reporter for the Associated Press. In 1963, Meisels immigrated to Israel and was employed by The Jerusalem Post. It was there he met his late wife, Martha, who went on

to win national acclaim as the newspaper's consumer affairs reporter.

He joined the Israel Broadcasting Authority as a reporter in its English news department and subsequently became its military affairs correspondent.

Meisels' three decades as a foreign correspondent began with the American Broadcasting Company's then-fledgling operation in Israel, serving it as a radio news reporter and becoming an integral part of its news operation when the ABC bureau expanded and assigned him



Andrew Meisels (David Robinson)

to television correspondence as well. After separating from ABC, Meisels was appointed by AP Radio as its correspondent in Israel shortly before the Gulf War.

Meisels is survived by his mother, Margot, sister Marianne, and three daughters, Tamar, Ruth, and Judith. His wife, Martha, died two

years ago. The funeral is scheduled for 1 p.m. today at Hayarkon Cemetery in Tel Aviv. Jay Bushinsky



PM Binyamin Netanyahu cuts the ribbon opening the Ben-Shemen interchange yesterday. (Bryan McBarney)

First Trans-Israel Highway interchange dedicated

By LIAT COLLINS and Kim

The first section of the Ben-Shemen interchange on the yet-to-be-built Trans-Israel Highway was dedicated yesterday afternoon in the presence of Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, Finance Minister Dan Meridor, and National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon.

The Ben-Shemen interchange and the Kassem interchange, still under construction, are to be the major connections between the highway and the center of the country. The interchange cost NIS 70 million to build.

Netanyahu said that the ratio between the number of kilometers of roads and the number of cars in the country is very high, and more roads must be built. He also said he intends to build a network of railroads.

"If we don't build modern transportation networks for our children," Netanyahu said, "it will become impossible to live outside city centers, and economic development will be prevented."

Sharon said he would make every effort to see that farmers are not harmed by the expropriation of land for new roads.

Moshe Levy, head of the Trans-Israel Highway Company, said the road would be completed within five years.

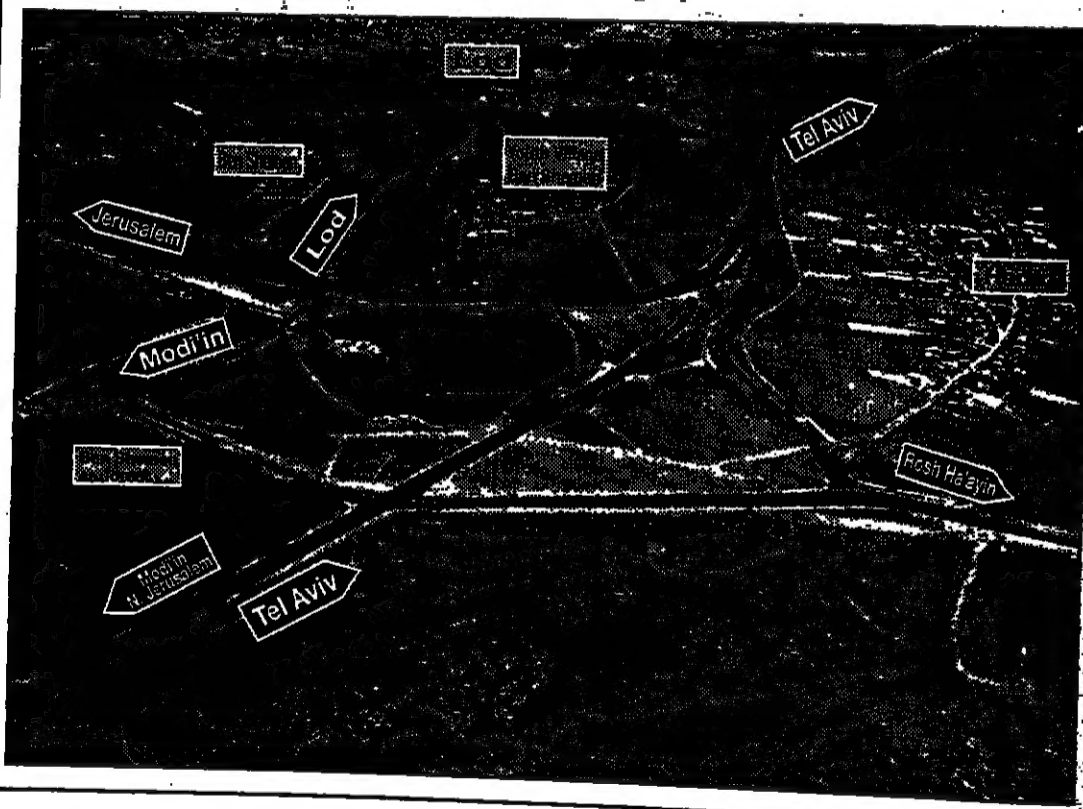
The company has recently issued an international tender for the construction of the 90 kilometers of highway between Gedera and Hadera, which is to be a toll road. Four international firms are expected to submit bids next month.

More than 100 protesters from different environmental groups –

including the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel and Green Action – demonstrated during the opening of the interchange. Nine protesters were questioned by police and released.

The demonstrators were supported by Prof. John Whiteleg from England's Liverpool University, who backed their claims that the government should be investing more in developing a public transport infrastructure than building new highways.

SPNI spokeswoman Orit Nevo said: "This is not a fight to save a flower here or there. This is about preventing pollution and preserving quality of life." She said the Trans-Israel Highway would not solve traffic problems, but simply create new ones.



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הכרזת תשלום

Levy calls for new talks with PA

By news agencies

VALLETTA, Malta — Throwing a possible lifeline to the Middle East peace process, Foreign Minister David Levy yesterday made a direct offer to reopen talks with Palestinians.

"The choice in favor of peace, as far as my country is concerned, constitutes an absolutely binding obligation," Levy said, as Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat sat among other delegates at a gathering of 27 European and Mediterranean nations.

"We have... to dissipate these storm clouds," Levy added.

Arafat also sounded ready to move ahead. "Without talk, nothing can be accomplished," he said, after greeting Levy with a handshake at a reception opening the two-day conference.

Hopes were high the two men would meet face-to-face in Malta — which would be the highest-level encounter since talks collapsed last month.

However, it was not clear whether they would get together later for a meeting. Contradictory statements by Levy and Arafat cast doubt over such a meeting taking place.

Levy said it would be possible, while Arafat said Levy was due to meet with PA Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Nabil Shaath, under the sponsorship of Hans van Mierlo, Holland's foreign minister and conference chairman, and Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa.

Israeli sources said in response that Levy would either meet Arafat "or nobody at all."

Arafat told the conference that Israel's settlement policy has forced the peace process into "running around in a closed circle, without any type of positive agreement."

He also accused Israel of blocking construction of a Palestinian harbor and airport, contributing to the economic desperation in the Palestinian areas.

Levy, meanwhile, demanded Palestinians take "unequivocally clear" steps to oppose and clamp down on terrorism. He cited the March 21 suicide bombing that killed three women in a Tel Aviv cafe.

"We would like the Palestinian Authority to broadcast, to publicize an unequivocally clear message against terrorism, refuting terrorism, returning to the dialogue, making the peace objective a common goal. That I believe is the only single remedy," he said.

"A code of conduct will have to be elaborated, and further work carried out with a view to bringing about that lasting peace which we strive towards."

In their speeches, Levy and Arafat sounded moderate. Both stayed away from the strident rhetoric that has marred Israeli-Arab relations in the past. Levy initially feared Arab delegates would turn the conference into an Israel-bashing forum.

"The European Union is seriously concerned about the situation in the Middle East and the current deep impasse in the negotiations," said van Mierlo, whose nation currently holds the presidency of the 15-nation European Union.

US special Mideast envoy Dennis Ross is due to arrive tomorrow on a "shuttle mission" between Jerusalem and Gaza in an effort to save the peace process.

Ross is expected to present to Israeli and Palestinian leaders the new proposal formulated by President Bill Clinton to jumpstart the stalled peace process.

Michal Yudelman contributed to this report.



Foreign Minister David Levy and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat shake hands, while Netherlands Foreign Minister Hans Van Mierlo (right) looks on, before the start of the Euro-Mediterranean conference in Malta yesterday. (Reuters)

Foreign troops reach violence-ridden Albania

By ERIC KIRSCHBAUM

TIRANA (Reuters) — Italian, French and Spanish troops arrived in Albania by air and sea yesterday to safeguard humanitarian aid in a well-orchestrated show of military force.

Nearly 1,200 soldiers began landing in the western port city of Durrës and at Tirana airport shortly after dawn. They set up two key bridgeheads in the volatile Balkan nation, preparing the way for an eight-nation force of 6,000 soldiers.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan applauded the mission to Albania,

racked by violence since an armed uprising erupted following the collapse of fraudulent investment schemes.

But Annan said the soldiers on the Italian-led mission were in Albania to protect aid convoys and not disarm rebels, a task that should be left to Albanian authorities.

"I think the concept of the mission... has the right approach," Annan said in Rome. "This operation is a humanitarian one to make sure aid gets to the people."

Albanian Prime Minister Bashkim Fino warmly welcomed the start of

"Operation Alba," the Italian word for "dawn." He said the presence of the soldiers would help restore peace and order.

"They will help Albania overcome the grave crisis that has gripped our country," Fino said.

Some 300 people have been killed and 700 injured during the weeks of armed anarchy and banditry that have swept Europe's poorest nation.

Tens of thousands of weapons ended up in the hands of rebel gangs and ordinary Albanians after raids on armories, left undefended when soldiers and police deserted their posts. An estimated one

million rifles were stolen during the mayhem.

There were no signs yesterday of an end to the violence.

Police killed an escaped convict in a shootout in the southeastern town of Bilisht after he wounded two officers.

In the northern town of Shkoder, a gunman shot dead a hospital patient undergoing surgery for gunshot wounds.

Special police forces in Gramsh confiscated three trucks yesterday filled with automatic rifles, machine guns and grenade launchers during a raid, Albania's news agency ATA said.

Gramsh, about 100 km south of Tirana, has been a center for the illegal arms trade after three army depots nearby were emptied last month and 100,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles went missing.

In Tepelene, also in the south, two secondary schools were reopened after parents agreed they would take turns guarding them with Kalashnikovs.

"We are here to help Albania in a moment of national difficulty," said Italian Defense Minister Beniamino Andreatta, who flew to Durrës port to observe the landing.

Just moments after six Italian military

planes carrying 150 paratroopers landed at Tirana airport, the French troop transport ship Orage, with 450 French soldiers, reached Durrës. Albania's main port 40 km west of the capital.

In cold, windy conditions, the French troops unloaded four helicopters, six tanks and dozens of armored vehicles as the Italian navy flagship Vittorio Veneto patrolled offshore.

A team of 60 French marines had made a sweep of Durrës harbor before the landing began because of reports there might be a guerrilla attack, French military officials said.

Russia, NATO fail to reach breakthrough

MOSCOW (Reuters) — Negotiations yesterday failed to bring a breakthrough to ease relations between Moscow and NATO, strained by the alliance's plans to accept new members from Eastern Europe.

After almost three hours of talks between Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana, the Russian side came out with a brief statement, which said that a planned pact on future relations was far from ready.

"A practical conversation took place. It was stated that positions on some issues, became closer," the Foreign Ministry statement said.

"At the same time, some difficult questions remain which must be resolved to pave the way for a mutually acceptable document on relations between Russia and NATO," it said, adding consultations between the two sides would continue.

Primakov said last week that Russia hopes to sign a partnership document with NATO on May 27 in Paris.

But President Boris Yeltsin, who will discuss NATO enlargement and the proposed agreement with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl later this week, made clear that Moscow would not sign the document just for the sake of sticking to the target date.

"The road leading to the agreement is long and difficult," Yeltsin said in an interview with German magazine Stern, made public yesterday. "Naturally, such a document will be signed only if the results of the talks suit Russia," he added.

The latest, fourth round of talks in Moscow was marred by tough rhetoric on both sides, blaming each other for doing too little to come to terms.

The main sticking point is Russia's fear that the alliance's plans to invite in former Soviet bloc countries in July will lead to a military build-up near its borders. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic are the front-runners to join.

Russia is also demanding a say in some NATO decision-making.

"So far NATO has not changed enough for us not to feel a threat if the alliance's military structures approach our borders," Inter-Tass news agency quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov, who recently held talks in Washington, as saying.

Yeltsin's spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky, in charge of coordinating foreign policy in the Kremlin, complained on the eve of talks that some NATO members "are not showing enough desire to seek a compromise."

In Brussels, diplomats said they were disappointed with the tough conditions laid down by Primakov when he visited Paris last week. They said he had effectively asked NATO to rule out the future military reinforcement of new alliance members.

Kremlin leaders gave a warm welcome to Indian Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda last month and Iranian parliamentary speaker Ali-Akbar Nateq-Nouri, who left Moscow on Monday. Chinese President Jiang Zemin is due to visit Moscow on April 22-26.

Whites turn backs on blacks at march through tense Philly neighborhood

By DINAH WEINBERG BRIN

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — White residents came out onto their front steps Monday and turned their backs on about 500 blacks who marched through the working-class neighborhood in a protest against racial violence.

Hundreds of police kept watch Monday on the mostly white Gray's Ferry section, where racial tensions have been running high since the beating of a black family by a mob of whites, and the killing of a white teenager during a robbery.

Angry words flew between some of the marchers and the onlookers, but there was no violence, and there were no arrests.

"They're turning their backs on the reality that Philadelphia has to become a city of brotherly love," said Rasheeda Ali, who marched

through the narrow streets of the neighborhood with a baby in her arms. "They're turning their backs on brotherly love."

"Gray's Ferry residents marching in unity," one banner proclaimed. Many marchers carried the red, green, and black flag representing black nationalism. Others held signs that read: "Bring good to the hood."

"They walk by here, they stroll, they want to start trouble," said white resident Michael McBride.

Angry at the turned backs, many of the marchers shouted taunts. "White trash!" one black man yelled. "God loves us all, white trash!"

At one point a group of marchers rushed toward white onlookers, but police and community-appointed marshals averted a brawl.

As the march took place, an

interfaith service was held a mile away. Among the speakers were Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan and Mayor Ed Rendell.

Farrakhan told the mostly black audience that they must oppose all violence, not just acts committed by whites.

"Gray's Ferry exists throughout this nation," he said. "I applaud your having zero tolerance of police brutality and mob attack. We should also have zero tolerance of drive-by shootings, drug addiction and carjacking."

Representatives of the Methodist, Episcopal, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches appeared with Farrakhan, but Jewish and Roman Catholic clergymen stayed away.

Rendell, who is Jewish, was criticized by Jewish leaders for appearing with a man they call a

"bigot" and "a figure who epitomizes divisiveness."

"I confess before the world I am not that," Farrakhan replied.

Farrakhan praised Rendell for appearing with him, saying that "although he has taken a lot of heat for what he has dared to do, I believe, Mayor Rendell, that history will applaud your effort."

The march and service were in response to the February 23 beating of Annette Williams, her son, and nephew by a mob of white men outside a Roman Catholic church social hall. Eight men have been charged with ethnic intimidation.

A month later, two black men shot and killed Christopher Brinkman, the 16-year-old son of a white police officer, during a drug store robbery that police said was not racially motivated. Two black men were charged.

German insurers: Old claims to be paid quickly

By MARILYN HENRY

NEW YORK — German insurance companies, facing a lawsuit in the US over war-era insurance policies, said this week that outstanding claims would be processed "quickly and not bureaucratically," but most claims were settled in the 1950s.

Other insurers, however, have said they have no moral or legal responsibility to pay thousands of claimants who have filed a class-action lawsuit in US federal court in New York.

The suit accuses Allianz, Assicurazioni Generali and five other European insurers of refusing to honor policies and annuities belonging to Holocaust victims. The suit, which was filed on March 31, estimates that a typical policy would be worth about \$75,000.

The companies, with the exception of Allianz, have come up with every excuse in the book to avoid addressing the issue, which is simple: Either they have policies or they don't have policies. Either they paid or they didn't pay," the plaintiffs' attorney, Ed Fagan, said yesterday in New York.

"One says, 'Our warehouse was destroyed and we don't know anything about it,'" Fagan said. "Another said it did not begin offering life insurance until 1960. Who cares? You sold annuities before 1960."

The Italian insurance giant, Generali, has said it would open its records for inspection but is not liable for the policies because its operations in Poland were seized by the Communist regime after the war.

The vast majority of restitution claims against German insurers were settled in German compensation agreements, said Gabriele Hoffmann, spokesman for the Association of German Insurers, which represents 500 insurance companies.

A lump sum payment was made to Israel and individual claims were settled under a 1953 law in which West Germany assumed responsibilities arising from the Third Reich, she told The New York Times.

"We assume that companies will continue to look in their archives for open cases where no compensation was made," she told the Times. "We assume that the companies will be aware of their responsibilities and will deal quickly and not bureaucratically with any claims."

Allianz, based in Munich, recently announced that it would hire the auditing company Arthur Andersen to examine its files. If it identifies policies, the company said, it would seek out and pay the owners or heirs.

The insurer also said it would set up telephone help lines, including in Hebrew, to advise potential claimants on procedures.

INDICTMENT

Continued from Page 1

filling their obligations and probing the case thoroughly.

The police apparently has not made any recommendations concerning Netanyahu, who has refused to comment. They also reportedly found no reason to suspect that Bar-On knew of any attempts to get him appointed. Hanegbi refused to comment on reports he might be charged on counts of breach of trust.

Meretz Party leader Yossi Sarid, who filed the initial police complaint that kicked off the investigation, said he would demand to see all its material to ensure there is no discrepancy between the police recommendations and the actions of the State Attorney's Office.

MK Yossi Beilin, competing for the Labor Party leadership, said: "If the [news] reports are right, an accusing finger should be pointed directly at the prime minister. From a moral point-of-view, he has lost his mandate and can no longer act as premier in a civilized country."

MK Ophir Pines (Labor) said Arbel has no option but to act on the police recommendations, because the inquiry was carried out with her office's full cooperation. He said Hanegbi should immediately suspend himself and the government should resign.

ACTION

Continued from Page 1

to resist it and will end up emulating Sneh.

The Likud response is also beginning to take shape. Likud spokesmen will note that Bar-On was given a clear bill of health and therefore there could have been no conspiracy. It will be argued that it is the prosecution which indicates, not the police.

The history of how previous attorneys-general were appointed will be dredged out. It will be claimed that political wheel-dealing is not criminal. Had Labor's appointments been investigated, they would have smelled no better, it will be said.

But while these arguments are already being test-driven, political pragmatists are preparing contingency plans for a situation in which Hanegbi must go. Some see him exchanging portfolios

with Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy.

Others picture a situation with Hanegbi out altogether, replaced by Levy, who will in turn be replaced by Health Minister Yehoshua Matza, leaving the door slightly open for Hanegbi to go back to his original ministry. But others assume that Netanyahu might keep the justice portfolio for his first choice, Ya'acov Ne'eman, providing he can emerge from his own legal travails quickly enough.

QUESTIONED

Continued from Page 1

intends to leave his current position, regardless of the outcome of the commission's findings.

Maj. Y. deputy commander of the CH-53 squadron. He was cautioned over his pre-flight briefing to the pilots of the fatal flight. He reportedly called the pair a "formation," but did not designate either pilot its leader. He was also

cautioned regarding the unclear procedure for extinguishing lights before crossing the border into Lebanon.

Maj. A. operations officer for the south Lebanon regional brigade. A 32-year-old paratrooper officer, he was responsible for collecting the flight roster, which was not done, thus causing initial confusion over the identities of the dead. The roster was eventually found in the pocket of the commander of the Beaufort position, who died in the crash.

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The options option

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's eyes light up when he talks about the potential of the Israeli economy. He sees no reason why Israel cannot double its growth rate to the level of Hong Kong in its heyday.

Fundamentally, he is right. But rather than freeing up the economy and allowing it to fly, Netanyahu looks unable to go beyond keeping Israel's economy just above water.

The rolling economic summit among Netanyahu, Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel, and Finance Minister Dan Meridor seems to be focused on the perennial fight between the central bank and the Finance Ministry over interest rates and budget cuts. In a now tired refrain, the Finance Ministry begs for a cut in interest rates, and the bank responds: not until inflation is more under control.

Frenkel is right not to lower rates based on undelivered government promises of cuts. And the cuts proposed by Meridor are certainly a step in the right direction. But the focus on interest rates and minor budget corrections, however necessary, is like treating a chronic infection with band-aids.

The current slowdown in the economy began under the previous government and continues under the current one. While the rockiness of the peace process certainly does not help the economy, it is not the main cause of the problem, as the opposition sometimes suggests.

To find the real problem it is necessary to look at the economy's vital signs. The current government is nowhere near offsetting its predecessor's yawning budget, trade, and current-account deficits. According to yesterday's Central Bureau of Statistics report, inflation is also currently running well above the government's target for the year. And aside from these gloomy signs, the anemic growth in labor productivity since 1991 should be seriously troubling the country's political and economic leaders. The benchmark rate for labor productivity growth among industrialized countries is about 2 percent per year. Anything less, and Israel will have trouble competing in the global economy.

Since 1991, Israel's labor productivity growth rate has been less than 2 percent. In 1993 and 1994 Israeli productivity actually dropped by about 1 percent each year. Tinkering with interest rates and the budget will not change this. What is needed is fundamental government reform, privatization, and deregulation.

Labor productivity is a function of efficiency, which is honed by competition and free markets. Privatization and deregulation are therefore the best way for government to spark increased productivity, and put some color into the cheeks of the economy.

On this front, the recent reports that Rafael, Israel Aircraft Industries, and TAAS-Israel

Industries will all be sold within two years, and the successful floating of 17 percent of Israel Discount Bank shares are encouraging developments. It is also good to hear that the government believes it will meet its privatization target of NIS 4 billion this year.

Despite the progress that is being made, the sense is that the government is working around the edges of the problem, nibbling at it, and trying to steer clear of the biggest, baddest privatization targets, such as the Israel Electric Corporation.

Such an incremental, non-confrontational approach could make sense if it were part of some coherent strategy for achieving Netanyahu's ambitious objectives. At least we assume they are ambitious, because we do not actually know what they are.

During the election campaign, Netanyahu spoke of quickly selling 100 major government companies, such as Bezeq, El Al, and so on. Upon entering office, Netanyahu took the task of organizing this privatization program away from the Finance Ministry and into his own office.

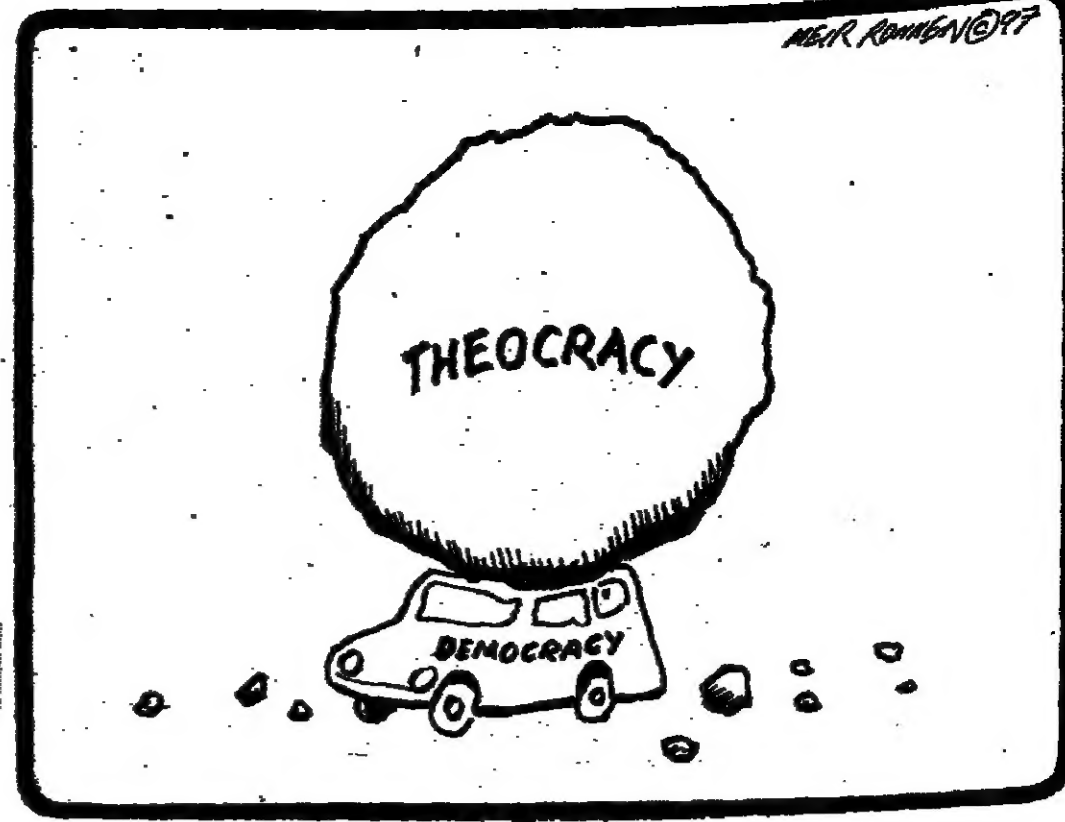
Having taken privatization under his wing, and knowing his passion for free-market reform, the public waited expectantly for the revolutionary change to begin. What has happened, instead, is a continuation of the positive but inadequate pace of the previous government, while the one dramatic plan to jump-start privatization has been shelved.

The previous government had a plan to privatize about NIS 5b. in assets by selling stock options to the general public. This plan was modeled on the successful execution of a similar options offering in the Czech Republic. The Peres government was all set to go with this plan, and set it aside until after the elections so that it would not be charged with "bribing" the public as an election gimmick.

The options system is a proven way to jump-start privatization on a massive scale, and in a way that does not just shift ownership from the government to a few individuals. It gives people a stake in privatization, and even the playing field between politically organized minorities and the public interest.

In fact, it is such a good idea, and seemingly so in sync with Netanyahu's instincts, that it is a wonder he did not go ahead with it immediately.

Instead, the Netanyahu government seems to have shelved this plan for no better reason than the fact that the other team authored it. But if Labor fingerprints are a problem, why does not Netanyahu simply double it, thereby creating his own, bolder plan? The public deserves a serious approach to privatization; if Netanyahu will not implement the options option, he is late in unveiling his own, better idea.



The scorpion's sting

MOSHE ZAK

As the Malta congress—a confab of European Union and Mediterranean countries' foreign ministers—gets underway, it's worth remembering that Malta fever is a disease caused by bacteria, for example in unpasteurized goat's milk.

In the past the Arabs objected to Israel's participation in similar congresses. This time it was Israel that delayed accepting the invitation until the last minute, until it received guarantees from the hosts that it would not have to drink bacteria-infested milk served up by the Arab states in the form of anti-Israel resolutions.

Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo (who opened the congress, as Holland is currently president of the EU) had to work overtime to persuade his Israeli counterpart to come to Malta. The Dutch minister shuttled between Gaza and Beit She'an, where David Levy lives, and passed on his impression that the Palestinian Authority would not pressure the congress to pass anti-Israel resolutions. He could not promise that Arab speakers would not criticize Israel, but there will be no resolutions condemning Israel.

The three-way negotiations between Israel, the Palestinians and the EU are symbolic of the turn for the better in Israel's status. In the past Israel was boycotted, and now Israel sets the terms for its participation, and did not agree to take part in the congress before it received an explicit undertaking from the organizers that they would do everything in their power to prevent the congress turning into an arena in which Israel would be pilloried and abused.

The Dutch minister did not conceal his opinion that the congress would be pointless without Israel's participation. EU members know that the pro-Arab resolutions

passed at the Venice congress at the height of the oil crisis after the Yom Kippur War, when Israel was at its lowest ebb, did nothing to commend the EU to Israel as a potential mediator in the Israeli-Arab conflict. The Europeans were angry when Israel refused to include the EU among the sponsors of the Madrid congress in 1991, and they were angry when Israel explicitly said that it preferred American mediation. The

Israel must be wary in Malta

Belgian Willi Klaas and the British Gerald Kaufman proposed European sanctions against Israel for this in their respective parliaments. But Israel held its ground, and insisted that it preferred the Americans as mediators.

The Malta congress, like the Barcelona congress before it, is intended to strengthen the EU's position in the Mediterranean, and also to draw the countries involved in the Israeli-Arab conflict under the umbrella of the European-Mediterranean congress, and so to create a framework of European economic and diplomatic tutelage which will include all the states in the region. In order to achieve this aim the EU promised Israel that the current conflict with the Palestinians would not be discussed at the Malta congress. David Levy went to Malta yesterday with that promise.

But this does not mean this is how things will turn out in Malta. The Arabs are too used to attacking Israel at every international congress.

IT'S LIKE the story of the scorpion

that asked a camel to carry it across the Suez Canal, and promised it would not sting it. The camel agreed, and the scorpion climbed onto its hump. Halfway across the canal the scorpion stung the camel, and as it sank beneath the water the camel cried out, "How could you do that? Now we'll both drown." "What can I do," replied the scorpion. "That's my nature."

It is hard to believe that the Arabs will keep their word and not sting Israel at the Malta congress, but that will not make Israel drown, any more than did all the other condemnations and boycotts against Israel at the congresses of the Muslim nations, the non-aligned nations, the Arab nations, and even the UN assembly.

Condemnatory resolutions at Malta will hurt the EU more than Israel. They will strengthen Israel's objections to European participation in the diplomatic process. So the organizers of the congress will probably do their best to disinfect the congress resolutions from anti-Israel bacteria. But until the end of the congress there is no cause for rejoicing.

The foreign minister will have to be wary of an attempt to set up three offices on behalf of the congress: one in Europe and two in Jerusalem. Separate offices in west and east Jerusalem: on the face of it, no more than an administrative matter, but actually a very serious political decision. It implies EU approval for the partition of Jerusalem. Such a decision must be blocked. It would be more harmful than any condemnation. Israel must make it clear to the EU that it will not permit the establishment of two offices in one Jerusalem.

The writer, a veteran journalist, comments on current affairs.

Travel sickness

SUSAN HATTIS ROLEY

Israel's relations with the US, its only major ally, appear to be in a state of deep crisis, despite Prime Minister Netanyahu's reassuring declarations following his two-hour meeting with President Clinton last week. The White House perceives the current Israeli policy as being harmful to its own interests.

But, one might argue, Netanyahu was elected on a platform which combined "Peace with security" with a disinclination to go beyond the concessions made by the previous government in the 1995 Taba agreement.

The political/security cocktail we have at the moment, is the direct result of the realization of this platform. We are now getting what a large majority of the Jewish population in this country voted for.

So we really have nothing to complain about, and since this population isn't dumb, when the time comes it will undoubtedly draw the appropriate conclusions. Yet it was not the political situation that got me most upset last week, but the fact that Sara Netanyahu, masters Yair and Avner and the inevitable nanny (or was it one of Sara's best friends again?) went off on two additional trips abroad—on the very same week that the Prime Minister's Office put in a request for another NIS 5 million for "travel abroad" after it had spent the NIS 1.5m. allocated for this purpose in the 1997 budget.

It was also last week that I discovered that, despite the prime minister's promises that there would be no increase in income tax, the income tax I shall be paying on my current gross annual income (which is less than half the gross monthly income of a large number of senior figures in our economy) will be significantly higher than what I paid last year.

Why should we pay for the PM's family junkets?

"But at the end of the year the income tax authorities will have paid you back whatever surplus tax you paid during the year, linked to the index plus the current rate of interest," my CPA tried to reassure me.

I shall undoubtedly get some of my tax money back in the summer of 1998, but in the meantime I shall have to dig into savings that are earning a higher rate of interest than that which the income tax authorities are paying. And this beyond the rise in real terms in the net rates of income tax that I have to pay this year—from 23 to 24 percent to a certain sum, and from 30 to 45 percent from a certain sum upwards. Did someone say "read my lips"?

WE ARE being asked to pay for the travels of our self-proclaimed royal family.

Why? According to the media but denied by Sara Netanyahu the problem all started with an agreement drawn up by the attorney (later justice minister, then: ex-justice minister) Ya'acov Ne'eman between the royal couple back in March 1993, after Netanyahu, who was running for the Likud leadership at the time, admitted to adultery. According to the media, the agreement included a stipulation that Sara would always join her husband on his travels, and as Sara has admitted in several newspaper interviews since, she cannot stand the thought of being separated from the boys.

The problem is not that the Netanyahus should have reached such an agreement, but the fact that Israel's taxpayers are being asked to pay for it. Former finance minister MK Avraham Shohat recently asked to see the alleged agreement, or at least this particular article. So far Shohat has received no response—just heaps of abuse from MK Silvan Shalom, one of the Likud representatives in the Knesset Finance Committee.

But it was not all bad news. Last week a botanist friend urged me to drive down to Beersheva. To the east of Highway 40, she said, between milestones 194 and 196, there is the most glorious blossoming of black figs, and a grouping of yellow ones, or "albino."

The flora in many parts of the country appears to have benefited from the strange weather we have been having—summer in autumn and winter in spring. Perhaps the prime minister should take masters Yair and Avner to see the flora of Eretz Yisrael rather than the Rome zoo.

The writer, a political scientist, is a member of the Labor Party Central Committee.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CONSERVATIVE JEWS

Sir, — Recent events within the Jewish world are making it difficult for me to maintain my pride as an Israeli religious Jew. Yes, I am a Masorti/Conservative Jew, yet groups of so-called Jewish leaders want to discredit my Judaism and my right to consider myself a religious Jew. Rabbinical groups have the hutzpa to disqualify Reform and Conservative Jews, and Israeli politicians are insensitive and ignorant as they fulfill political agreements. Have Israeli politicians never been taught what it means to be honest and stand up for what is right? Do they not care about delegitimizing and disenfranchising a major segment of the Jewish world in Israel and abroad? Are our politicians so out of touch with non-political realities that the best some MKs could do is be absent and/or abstain from the obscene first

Omer.

ENOUGH!

Saddam Hussein (how stupid can you get?) and when they had an Israeli negotiating partner who was willing to make major concessions, they sent in the suicide bombers. What a record of accomplishments!

Enough! It is time that the Palestinians start taking responsibility for their own actions and fate, just as it is time that we Jews ask ourselves whether we really want to rule over people whose religion, history, social, economic and educational development are far, far removed from our own. No nation in this world has managed to rule over total strangers.

MANFRED GANS

Upper Nazareth (Leonia, N.J.).

SHABBAT SHOPPERS

Sir, — I was shocked to read the Meitzit banners in the Tel Aviv Mall controversy: they need to shop on their "one day off."

What about those who would have to work as a result? Some would be parents of children for

CHRISTIAN SUPPORT

Sir, — I feel I must write in reply to Emil L. Fackenheim's article of April 6, "The long return." As a Christian who has been brought up to love and respect Israel, I was again dismayed at the attitude of the Catholic Church (and indeed most churches) during the recent meetings at the Grand Mosque in Rome.

I write this for two reasons: first of all to reassure Mr. Fackenheim and others that there are thousands of Christians who do support Israel, and second, most importantly, to remind fellow Christians that Israel is still very much the center of God's plans. "I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you," is still valid; and we would do well to remember that the next time we pass judgment on Israel or its people.

BRENDAN CARLILL

Kibbutz Rosh Hanikra.

RACIAL SLURS

Sir, — When I served in the US Air Force, I was also the butt of the sort of "jokes" the young Ethiopian soldier endured from an IDF officer. I was referred to as the little Jew boy from New York. Quite a joke. In civilian life, there were the constant remarks such as "lousy kike," "sheeny bastard," even "Jew bastard." I had difficulties in requesting admission to several universities because of the quota system restricting Jews. And so forth.

I strongly advise that the severest penalties should be used as a deterrent to such (supposed) jokes. This is especially important here in Israel where there is a steady influx of immigrants. The Russian children also have a hard time in the schools because of these racial slurs.

SAMUEL BOSHES

Tel Aviv.

Clinton's empty promise

Rolf Ekeus, one of the unsung heroes of our time, knows something about weapons of mass destruction. He is head of the UN Special Commission for the Disarmament of Iraq (UNSCOM), the outfit that gets harassed and threatened as it goes around Iraq looking for the monster weapons that Saddam has promised to get rid of.

In a recent address to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Ekeus reported what he found. Iraq, he said, possesses not just the odd Scud missile or two, but an operational missile force that includes working missiles, launchers, support vehicles, fuel and the chemical or biological warheads to go on them. Iraq is also believed to possess the ability to produce chemical and biological agents, and might have stocks of these as well.

Thus, despite the most intrusive inspection regime ever imposed on any country in history—an inspection regime undertaken in the uniquely favorable conditions of full international backing on a country totally isolated and defeated in war—Iraq continues to hide these proscribed weapons.

Keep this in mind when you hear President Clinton, in a last-ditch effort to get a wary Senate to pass the international Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), use the phrase "banish poison gas from the earth." At a lavish pro-CWC ceremony on April 4, he promised that "by ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention... we can give our children something our parents and grandparents never had—broad protection against the threat of chemical attack."

It will do nothing of the sort. Sure, those countries that have no interest in building or using chemical weapons will sign the CWC and adhere to it. But those countries that want to continue making chemical weapons as the poor

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

man's nuke—North Korea, Syria and Libya, for example—will do one of two things:

Either they will not sign the CWC and thus be subject to no inspection. Or they will sign it knowing that, given Iraq's experience, they will have no problem getting away with concealment. If Iraq, under an exponentially more

A treaty banning chemical weapons won't work

intrusive inspection regime, can hide missiles, they can surely hide a roomful of nerve gas.

The CWC will be useless at giving us "protection against the threat of chemical attack." In fact, worse than useless. The CWC will not just give us a false sense of security, it will make rogue states even more secure in their pursuit of illegal weapons. Why? Because now, with just a little effort and guile, they can get the stamp of approval of some international inspection agency.

After all, that is what Iraq did with nukes before the Gulf war. As a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iraq was repeatedly inspected and certified nuclear weapons-free by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Only after the Gulf war did we discover that Iraq had not one but several parallel nuclear programs going on, all undetected. Had the war broken out 18-24 months later, Iraq would have entered it nuclear armed—and IAEA approved.

IF THE CWC will not stop the bad guys from getting chemical weapons, what's the point? CWC advocates have a fallback: It will

make a statement. By rendering chemical weapons programs "illegal"—I quote Sen. Joseph Biden, at the opening of Senate hearings on the treaty, April 8—it will also provide us with a valuable tool: moral suasion of the entire international community to isolate and target those states who violate the norm.

This is fiction (the "international community" deploying fatuousness "moral suasion") to enforce a fantasy (international "norms"). Consider an even more morally compelling international "norm": the prohibition against the actual use of chemical weapons. (CWC merely bans possession.) The Geneva Protocol on that dates back to 1925. Well, in 1988, in the face of this venerable norm, Saddam dropped poison gas on rebellious Kurds, killing 5,000 innocents.

How did the "international community" respond to this horrific violation of the Geneva Protocol? It found even "moral suasion" too strenuous. It did nothing.

Today, Ekeus's UNSCOM reports repeatedly to the UN Security Council about Saddam's flagrant violations of the "norms" imposed upon him regarding weapons of mass destruction. How does the Security Council—the "international community" in executive session—respond? It has loosened the embargo on Iraq oil.

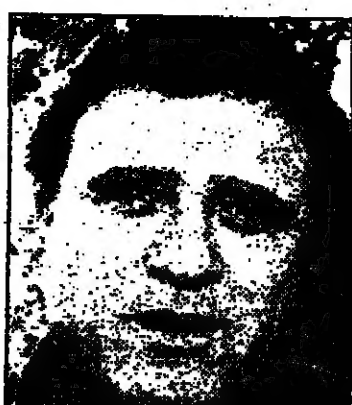
In international relations, there are no controlled experiments. There is only history. If we don't learn from history, we learn nothing. In light of our experience with Iraq, the president's faith that the CWC will "give our children something our parents and grandparents never had—broad protection against the threat of chemical attack"—is deeply misplaced and highly dangerous.

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GRAPEVINE



Benny Gaon (Isaac Harari)



Yehoram Gaon (Efraim Kildetok)

Brotherly love

By GREER FAY CASHMAN

It all goes according to plan, the 15th Knesset may have its largest female representation ever. Hot on the heels of Prime Minister Yitzhak Mordechai's announcement that he intends to run in the next elections comes that of international marriage broker Helena Amram. Amram says that with her vast experience in bringing people of diverse backgrounds together, she can surely heal the rifts between religious and secular, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, rich and poor, etc., etc.

INTERNATIONALLY acclaimed violinist Shlomo Mintz has another string to his bow. His second great love after music is archery. Currently back home to play with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Mintz spends much of his spare time at the Givatayim archery range demonstrating his skill with a bow and arrow.

NOT THAT he didn't have something to sing about before, but now that he's a new and first time daddy, former Eurovision winner Yehor Cohen, 46, has really hit a high note in his life.

Cohen was in the delivery room last week to welcome his daughter Eliza into the world. He made it clear that he and the infant's mother, Dina Tzarfat, have no intention of getting married. They're just going to remain good friends.

JOINING LAST week's ministerial exodus to destinations abroad, Reuma Weizman went to the US to add her shoulder to the wheel in a national campaign against drug abuse.

But the president's wife has returned in time to present the awards at tomorrow's first regional championship for therapeutic horse-riding. The all-day event at Beit Yehoshua will be held under the auspices of the International Paralympic Equestrian Committee, a coup for British immigrant Anita Shkedi, who heads the Therapeutic Riding Club.

THE WARM affection between Yehoram Gaon, entertainer and Jerusalem City Councilman, and his older brother, Koor CEO Benny Gaon, is no secret. The younger Gaon sometimes interviews his business-tycoon sibling on his Radio 2 talk show.

The most recent interview, last Friday, was because Benny Gaon has authored a book. Zapping through his brother's career, Yehoram asked what he wanted to be when he grew up. Benny confessed that he'd always had a hankering to be mayor of Jerusalem but since Yehoram was the politician in the family, he surmised that if there was a Gaon who was going to be mayor it would be Yehoram. To this, the latter responded: "For you I'd give it up."

AFTER SINGING for the pope, songbird Ahinoam Nini has received an invitation to sing for King Hassan of Morocco. The date has yet to be finalized.

APPARENTLY unfamiliar with jazz, Agriculture and Environment Minister Rafael Eitan came across one while touring Tzippori Village last week, and asked: "What's that big toilet?"

Eitan, who thought that he had come for a ribbon-cutting ceremony, was slightly put out when he discovered that he'd been beaten to the mark by Tourism Minister Moshe Katsav, who had visited two weeks earlier.

BEING FAMOUS as a daughter and ex-wife is not enough for Lisa Presley. She wants to be a Hollywood someone in her own right, which is why she is taking acting lessons from John Travolta.

TIME IS running out for Sharon Stone. The 39-year-old actress promised herself she would be married by age 40.

Stone changes her boyfriends almost as frequently as she changes her underwear, but, as yet, Mr. Right has not materialized.

The Jewish nurse who may become Guyana's next president

By BERT WILKINSON

When he - a Guyana man born of indentured Indian immigrants - asked for her hand in 1943, her father threatened to shoot him.

When she - a Jewish woman from suburban Chicago - accompanied her new husband home to Guyana, his family was furious he'd taken a foreign bride.

Five decades after nurse Janet Rosenberg first met dentist Cheddi Jagan, then studying for his doctorate at Northwestern University, Illinois, she is now set to follow her husband on one final step of their remarkable odyssey - this time, succeeding him as president after his death in office a month ago.

Jagan is getting ready to move out of Guyana's wooden presidential mansion, State House. But few doubt she'll be moving back in as president after the elections due by January, given the adoration with which many Guyanese regard her.

Part of the Jagans' popularity and success stemmed from the fact that as a couple, they experienced firsthand the kind of racial tensions that divide the country.

As fiercely protective of her husband's legacy as she was of him, Jagan calls it a duty and a labor of love to further her husband's political accomplishments.

"It's not for me to decide," she said, sitting on the veranda of State House. "It is for the party." The Jagans' mutual devotion and shared communist ideology - she is even more hard-line than her late husband, whose Marxism mellowed over the years - kept them together despite the racial and political pressures on their marriage.

Janet Jagan endured three years of house arrest and five months in jail with her husband in the 1950s, when he first won an election in the Caribbean country, the only English-speaking nation in South America.

British and American administrations subsequently blocked him from power for decades, alarmed by his ties to Havana and Moscow.

Jagan finally got to rule Guyana in 1992, but death robbed him of completing even one term. He surprised many by the capitalist reforms he introduced, including stringent measures to repay the nation's foreign debt.

Although a member of Parliament, his wife held no official position in her husband's gov-

ernment at the time of his death, other than roving ambassador. But many Guyanese, including members of her own party, say she was the real power - and that if you weren't in her good graces, you couldn't reach her husband.

The ruling People's Progressive Party that the Jagans helped found chose her as premier when Jagan died after a heart attack.

Prime Minister Samuel Hinds succeeded him as interim president, but has shown no interest in the job permanently.

Her party - which draws its backing from the country's ethnic Indians - chose her as the presidential candidate, and the opposition parties of Guyana's minority blacks seem unlikely to mount a successful challenger.

"She is the most experienced and the best in a collective of leaders who are committed to a policy of continuity," Information Minister Moses Nagamootoo said.

Jagan has been a citizen of

Guyana since its independence in 1966, after the United States stripped her of citizenship for voting in local elections in 1947. Her son, one of the couple's two children, has lived most of his life in the United States.

Supporters praise her as a hard-working politician, promoter of Guyana's art, and editor for 20-plus years of the party's newspaper, *The Mirror*. She says she abhors corruption and nepotism.

Her critics say she - unlike her husband - is unforgiving and vengeful regarding perceived wrongs.

And many Guyanese still hold her race against her.

Actually, Jagan is so tanned by decades in the tropics that she looks not white but instead like a woman of mixed descent.

In spirit, she says, she is fully Guyanese.

"I haven't even been an American citizen since 1947," she says. "I live here and will die here."



The people's choice? Janet Jagan nee Rosenberg is likely to succeed her husband as leader of Guyana.

Not Page One

Antartica is ours

By Sam Orbaum

If the antisemites are right and we're bent on world domination, we'll do it the Jewish way: from the bottom up. So it comes as good news that we've conquered the south.

Antartica is ours. One of the few continents with more penguins than Jews, Antartica may not be the land God bequeathed his Chosen People, but He didn't say we couldn't live there either.

Former Lubavitcher David Hornstein didn't go to the tattered land to missionize among the natives, because there are no natives to speak of. Hornstein, originally from Melbourne, took his *Yiddish neshama* (soul) and his scientific expertise and went forth unto Scott Base on "The Ice" where he lived for a year.

He had no problem deciding which shul not to attend. He could just about scrape together enough souls for a minyan - except that the other nine humans with him were gentiles, and two of those were women.

It's not easy being a Jew.

Keeping Shabbat was a bit of a problem, because in the summer, the sun never sets. He consulted his mentor Rabbi Kazen, a New York Lubavitcher, who instructed him to follow New Zealand time. "You can perform any [religious] task with the goodwill and tolerance of others," Hornstein said with what seemed like enthusiasm, but it was hard to tell because we conducted the interview in cyberspace. "Scott Base management even allowed me to put a mezuzah on my door."

Every holiday was another challenging adventure. "I wanted to celebrate Pesach with a traditional Orthodox Seder," Hornstein relates. "On the C-130 Hercules resupply flight, I got enough matza and kosher wine - and a Haggada - to last over Pesach."

Hornstein and his nine Gentile Seder guests held what had to be the most southerly Seder in history. They went all the way, reading and interpreting the entire Haggada and feasting on chicken, chopped liver, matza-ball soup and *helsel*. "We even opened the door for Elihu, but poor Elihu had to battle minus 26 degrees and a snowstorm to get in."

"It was interesting that when the door opened for Elihu, a white mist wafted in. A bit of Yiddishkeit for the Antarctic."

It's not as if Hornstein never saw another co-religionist on The Ice, as the region is known. "Sure, I met a few hardy Jews. Nat Polish from

New York, studying penguins, David Lippman from the US Navy, Vicky Kraus from Denver, Eric Mistein, a C-130 Hercules navigator, we all celebrated Hanukkah together."

Succot was especially ticklish: sitting down to a meal in a hut in remembrance of desert wanderers can be a bit of a problem when the soup freezes solid before you can dip a spoon in. "Anything containing large proportions of water freezes fast at 35 below. Pickles are out. But dried fruit and salmon patties won't freeze to the inside of your mouth."

Hornstein assembled a low-rise succa - "so it shouldn't be blown away by the Katabatic winds" - out of the only wood available to him, imported bamboo. Not traditional, perhaps, but perfectly halachic, and more important, in the right spirit. (Hornstein will provide free advice on how to make a succa penguin-proof.)

Hornstein, 37, left his family behind in New Zealand - wife Susan, Daniel, 10, Sarah, eight, and Moshe, five - to join the team at Scott Base. What did he do there? Hard to say; you can never get a straight answer from a scientist: "I ran ozone monitoring equipment such as spectrophotometers, spectrometers, magnetometers, radar, three seismic stations and thermistor arrays." Uh-huh.

Then there are the maintenance tasks, such as "digging out the snow from in front of the freezers." Freezers? On The Ice? "Yeah, we use freezers to keep food warm." Hard to know when he's kidding.

It gets cold and it gets c-c-c-cold. Thermal gauges can be the difference between life and death when the wind-chill factor gets as low as 70 below, but it does get positively balmy: "At one stage over summer it was slightly edging above zero."

Maybe only one Jew in a million will feel like Hornstein does about The Ice, but he does not see this land as God-forsaken - with a capital G. "It has the most awe-inspiring, pristine views of the wonders of Hashem. How else can you describe perfection and complete and utter desolation?"

He's now back with his family, drawing out in Christchurch, New Zealand. He dreams of going back to The Ice someday, but for now, he'll take any reasonable job that comes his way.

"I'm unemployed but I have plenty of experience," he says. "Is there a need in Israel for a Jewish polar explorer?"

PARENTING

Finding the right balance of fat in your children's diet

By RUTH MASON

My children are one, three, five and 10 years old. Should I worry about fat in their diets at these ages? Should I give them one percent or three percent milk?

Connie Steinberg, MS, clinical nutritionist, replies: Questions about specific food items need to be taken in the context of the person's total dietary and exercise picture.

A nutritionist friend of mine was sitting next to a woman at a dinner party who declined to eat the chicken because she had read in the newspaper that adults eat too much protein and this is detrimental

to our health. My friend turned to her and asked, "But how do you know how much protein you are eating?"

We also need to look at your question in the context of your children's eating habits. Not knowing what those are, I can give you only general guidelines. You should not restrict fat in the diet of children under two years of age. Breast milk is 3.8 percent fat and that's exactly what babies and toddlers need.

The nervous system needs fat to develop properly. In addition, if the fat content in a food item is too low, then the concentration of the other nutrients, such as protein and calcium, may be too high for very young children's kidneys to han-

dle. And when fat is either too high or too low in the diet, calcium is not properly absorbed. For all these reasons, children should drink full-fat milk until the age of two, but they should not exceed three cups of milk a day.

Some people believe that limiting fat for children over two may prevent cardiovascular disease later on in life. This has not been shown to be true, except where there is a known family history of cardiovascular disease or risk factors such as high cholesterol. Assuming a mixed, healthy diet, there is no reason to restrict to low-fat milk if the children are of normal weight and there is no family history of cardiovascular disease.

The level of fat in children's diets should be considered from about the age of six or seven, but this goes beyond what kind of milk they drink. It's a good idea to get your children into the habit of not snacking on high-fat snacks like Bisl and Bamba in front of the television, and to make sure they get enough physical activity.

It's important to have a framework for snacks. For example, you can tell them they can have ice cream three times a week during the summer and once a week they can go to the store and buy whatever snack they want. Some families make candy a special Shabbat treat and don't allow it during the week. Of course you should make sure

that your children eat a healthy, balanced diet in general and that means following what in the US is now called the food pyramid.

The lower end of the scale is a suitable guideline for children; the upper end is meant for active adults and includes a daily allowance of six to 11 servings of bread, grain or cereal including pasta (one slice of bread or a half a cup of rice is a serving - smaller for younger children); three to five servings of vegetables; two to four of fruit, and I would recommend here a source of vitamin C and a source of vitamin A (dark green leafy or orange fruits and vegetables have vitamin A, and vitamin C is found in all citrus fruits as well

as strawberries, melon, broccoli, cabbage, and peppers); two to three servings of milk, yogurt or cheese; two to three servings of protein such as meat, poultry, fish, beans or nuts (a serving of meat is about two to three ounces of cooked meat).

Fats, oils and sugars should be eaten sparingly. You only need a couple of tablespoons a day of vegetable fat to fulfill your dietary needs.

Parents should also be aware that more than half of the calories in vegetarian Tivoli products such as hot dogs and schnitzel, which children like and many parents believe are healthy, come from fat. (In the hot dogs, for example, a 100-gram

serving is 219 calories. Fifteen grams out of the 100 is fat. Each fat gram is nine calories. So in each 219-calorie serving, 135 calories are from fat.)

But the fat content in a Tivoli meal can be lessened and balanced if you serve the schnitzel with vegetables and fruit instead of french fries and ice cream!

Similarly, it's important to realize that one percent milk does not mean the fat content of the milk is one percent of the calories in a serving. If you do the calculations, you will see that in one percent milk, about a quarter of the calories are from fat. In general, our diets should contain 30 percent of calories from fat.

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BUSINESS

in brief

No economic plan emerges from meetings

A third day of meetings among Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Finance Minister Dan Meridor, and Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel failed to produce concrete proposals on how to tackle the country's growing budget deficit and general economic slowdown.

Meridor and Frenkel then met in the afternoon in an attempt to thrash out their differences. Meridor is understood to favor a NIS 1 billion cut, to be matched by a one percent to 2% cut in interest rates. Frenkel agrees there should be a cut in public spending, but is refusing to use monetary policy as a vehicle for correcting the fiscal crisis. The two met again with Netanyahu last night, but again failed to reach agreement. *David Harris*

General Nutrition Co. to open 15 local stores

General Nutrition Companies has awarded an exclusive franchise agreement in Israel to open 15 stores over the next five years. The vitamin and mineral supplement retailer, based in Pittsburgh, said the first store will open in Rehovot. *AP*

Mishor: Redefine Trade and Industry roles

Some of the functions and roles of the Industry and Trade Ministry must be redefined, said new ministry director-general Dov Mishor, during his first formal meeting with senior colleagues this week. Given the changes in the local economy in recent years, there must be some administrative reforms. Mishor's predecessor, Yehoshua Gleitman, began the process of reforms, but admitted before leaving the post that much still has to be done. *David Harris*

Aeroflot, Boeing to sign plane deal

Russia's Aeroflot-Russian International Airlines will sign a final deal with US plane-maker Boeing Co on April 30 to buy ten 737-400 jets worth about \$400 million, a senior Aeroflot official said yesterday.

Aeroflot's acting chief executive Valery Okulov said the planes would be delivered in 1998-1999. "We will sign a final agreement on April 30," Okulov told a news conference. The two sides signed a memorandum of agreement on the deal in September 1996. *Reuters*

March inflation rises by 1%

Economist: Index not detecting lower property prices

By DAVID HARRIS
and Jerusalem Post Staff

The Consumer Price Index rose last month by a higher-than-expected one percent, the Central Bureau of Statistics announced yesterday.

It is the second consecutive month the index has risen by 1% or more.

Meanwhile, economist Ya'acov Sheinin said on Israel Radio that the index's housing component, which recorded an increase in real estate prices, had to be deformed since anyone involved in the property market knows that prices are declining.

Sheinin explained that in surveying housing prices one must consider the meaning of special

deals, like contractors offering heating systems or fully furnished kitchens, which may be lurking behind a deal's nominal price tag.

This increase, with most economists predicting a rise of 0.7% - 0.8%, means the CPI increased 2.6% in the first quarter, compared with 2.8% in the same period last year.

Inflation over the last 12 months was 10.5%, with the annual 1997 rate, based on the first three months, heading for 10.5% - 11%.

Urging caution for a second month in succession over the figures, CBS spokesman David Neumann pointed out that the 1% increase, to 146.8, is similar to that in March last year.

The major contributing factors to the rise in prices were the cost of fruit and vegetables and housing, in a similar pattern to February's index. Price rises in these two sections comprised some 50% of the overall March CPI increase.

Apartment prices rose an overall 1.3%, mainly because of the strong dollar. House sales were 1.3% more expensive, with rented accommodation costing an additional 1.1%.

The index for upkeep of apartments rose 0.5%, with electrical and plumbing repairs up 1.1%, aluminum foil and garbage bags 2.4% and domestic staff 1.2%.

Furnishings and household equipment prices rose 1%, mainly through bedding (1.4%), carpeting

(3.4%), tablecloths and tea towels (2.0%) and plants and flowers (11.5%).

Fruits and vegetables went up by an average 4.8% in March.

Fresh vegetables rose 4.9%, fruits 8.4%, with frozen vegetables rising 0.5% and fruits falling 0.3%.

The major price increases were for potatoes (28.7%), onions (19.9%), cucumbers (10%), persimmons (20.5%), oranges (11.4%) and apples (7.2%).

These were offset by reduction in the cost of tomatoes (18.9%), zucchini (7.6%), strawberries (9.2%) and bananas (3%).

Elsewhere, food (excluding fruit and vegetables) rose in price 0.9%, healthcare 0.7%, education, culture and entertainment 1.2%,

and transport and communications 0.9%.

The only index to fall was that of clothing and footwear, down 2.2%.

Clothing prices dropped 2.5%, and footwear 1.2%, reflecting the end of season sales.

April's index is also likely to be high, according to Central Bureau staff.

Various seasonal factors, such as the start of the summer clothing season, added Pessah expenses and the record-breaking dollar levels, suggest a CPI rise once again of about 1%.

Following the announcement, the Histadrut warned against a further cut in the state budget, and the Manufacturers Association warned the economy is still in crisis.

American Express stops car-rental insurance here

By MARILYN HENRY

NEW YORK - American Express has announced that starting June 1, the company will no longer provide automatic insurance for loss or dam-

age to rental cars in Israel that are billed on its credit card.

Ireland and Jamaica also will lose the coverage.

The three countries join Italy, Australia and New Zealand, where

American Express stopped the automatic insurance in 1993.

The cause seems to be the high losses associated with the rentals, which speaks volumes about Israeli drivers.

"In each instance, a small percentage of [card-holder] car-rental spending is resulting in a disproportionate number of claims," Catherine Cummings, director of public affairs for American

Express, said of the Israel, Ireland and Jamaica cancellations.

She was not more specific, except to say that the changes do not appear to be error-related, since the automatic insurance policies routinely did not cover losses related to "war or military activity."

"I think, for the most part, we would agree [terrorists] falls into that category," Cummings said.

China jails copyright pirates

By JANE MACARTNEY

'BEIJING (Reuters) - China signalled yesterday it was serious about cracking down on copyright theft, jailing seven pirates for terms of up to 17 years in some of its first convictions in a multi-million dollar underground industry.

China's Supreme People's Court sentenced seven businessmen to prison terms ranging from 1-1/2 years to 17 years after they were convicted of pirating video and audio compact discs, the Xinhua news agency said.

The sentences were the first against intellectual property pirates and signalled Beijing's growing determination to crack down on an industry that has troubled Sino-US ties in the last two years and is estimated to cost US companies \$2.3 billion a year in lost sales.

Bu Xinghua, former deputy general manager of the Suzhou Baodie Compact Disc plant in eastern Jiangsu province was sentenced to 17 years in prison for pirating 3.13 million audio and video compact discs, and making illicit sales of 12.06 million yuan (\$1.45m), the court said.

Bu committed the piracy in collaboration with Zhong Jiansheng, deputy manager of the company's business department between September 1994 and November 1995, the court said.

The company was also convicted of pirating and manufacturing 130,000 pornographic video compact discs, from which it earned an illicit profit of 690,000 yuan (\$83,000), it said.

Zhong was sentenced to 11 years and the company ordered to pay a fine of 200,000 yuan (\$24,000), it said.

Bu was also found to have accepted bribes of 15,000 yuan (\$1,800) and Hong Kong \$4,900 (\$630), the court said.

It was China's toughest action against pirates since it reached agreement with the US last June on the protection of intellectual property rights, averting a multi-billion dollar cross-Pacific trade war.

In another court verdict, Wang Binyan, former chairman and general manager of the Caixiang Audio and Video Products Manufacturing Ltd and its parent company, the Guangdong Audio and Video Publishing House, was sentenced to four years.

He was convicted of processing and manufacturing 5.08 million pirated CDs and VCDs, the court said.

The company was paid \$26.42m and HK\$1.43m (\$180,000) for illegally processing the discs.

BT shareholders approve \$20b. merger with MCI

By JEFF DAESCHNER

LONDON (Reuters) - British Telecommunications Plc's shareholders voted overwhelmingly yesterday in favor of a \$20 billion merger deal with US group MCI Communications Corp. following approval by MCI stockholders two weeks ago.

The merger would create a global force to rival two other major world telecoms alliances.

The combined Anglo-American company, called Concert Plc, would compete with the Unisource group, led by AT&T Corp., and GlobalOne, which includes Deutsche Telekom AG, France Telecom, and US Group Sprint Corp.

Concert was expected to extend its reach even further by sweeping into Latin America through a deal with

Portugal Telecom SA and a reported alliance with Telefonica de Espana SA.

Although BT confirmed its link with Portugal Telecom, it declined to confirm speculation about a deal between Concert and Telefonica, which is currently allied with AT&T's Unisource.

Earlier, Portugal Telecom confirmed a share exchange deal with Telefonica as part of a broader agreement between the two companies.

BT has been attempting to help fill the major hole in Concert's geographic jigsaw - Asia - by linking up with Japan's Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp.

Meanwhile, BT has joined state-owned Singapore Power, NTT and Singapore Technologies Telemedia (STT) to bid for a mobile phone and paging license in Singapore.

ISRAEL MONEY MARKETS

Patah (foreign currency deposit rates) (11.9.96)

Currency (deposit for)	3 MONTHS	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS
U.S. dollar (\$250,000)	4.750	5.000	5.275
Pound sterling (£100,000)	3.975	4.000	4.250
German mark (DM 200,000)	1.825	1.825	2.125
Swiss franc (SF 200,000)	0.825	0.750	1.000
Yen (10 million yen)			

(Rates vary higher or lower than indicated according to deposit)

Shekel Foreign Exchange Rates* (15.4.97)

CHECKS AND TRANSFERS	BANKNOTES	Rep.
Buy	Buy	Buy
Sell	Sell	Sell
Currency basket	3.6486	3.6724
U.S. dollar	3.3798	3.4333
German mark	1.9525	1.9440
Pound sterling	5.4820	5.5705
French franc	0.5804	0.5936
Japanese yen (100)	2.5757	2.7220
Dutch florin	1.7370	1.7051
Swiss franc	2.3016	2.3398
Swedish krona	0.4383	0.4484
Norwegian krona	0.4944	0.4923
Denish krona	0.5126	0.5211
Finnish mark	0.6332	0.6338
Canadian dollar	2.4147	2.4587
Australian dollar	2.6201	2.5935
S. African rand	0.7558	0.7581
Belgian franc (10)	0.9485	0.9518
Austrian schilling (10)	2.7743	2.8191
Italian lire (1000)	1.9633	2.0177
Jordanian dinar	4.7000	5.0300
Egyptian pound	0.9600	1.0400
ECU	3.8188	3.8804
Irish punt	5.1988	5.2804
Spanish peseta (100)	2.5182	2.5556

*These rates vary according to bank. **Bank of Israel.

SOURCE: BANK LEUMI



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Transportation and Engineering Services Division

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The Municipality seeks to invite bids from contractors for the above mentioned work.

Details and material, including the conditions of tender and the project contract, are available from: Yehoshua Gleitman, 30 Salford Square, Engineering Services Division, 1 Salford Square, 3rd floor, P.O. Box 407, Tel. 02-527-1555.

from Monday, April 14, 1997 (please call in advance). The cost of the tender documents is NIS 1,450 (non-refundable).

Bids should include a banked bank guarantee as detailed in the tender conditions. Bids submitted without a bank guarantee will not be considered. Bids must be placed in a sealed envelope, in which details of the tender are written. Bids should be sent by registered mail to the Municipality Engineering Services Division, 30 Salford Square, Jerusalem, by Tuesday, May 13, 1997. They may also be delivered by hand to the Engineering Services Division, 30 Salford Square, 181 on Tuesday, May 13, 1997, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 12 noon.

The Municipality does not undertake to accept the lowest or any other bid.

Yehoshua Gleitman
Project General

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הכרזת תביעה

State Cup semifinalists set

By ORI LEWIS

Betar Jerusalem, Maccabi Tel Aviv, Hapoel Beersheba and Bnei Yehuda will contest the semifinals of soccer's State Cup to be played on May 8 following their victories in yesterday's quarterfinal round.

Betar Jerusalem and Maccabi Tel Aviv had easy passages to the last-four with comfortable wins over Hapoel Beit She'an and Hapoel Tel Aviv respectively. Bnei Yehuda came through with a lone-goal win over Maccabi Haifa. Hapoel Beersheba needed penalties to overcome Hapoel Kfar Sava in the Negev.

Betar Jerusalem 4
Hapoel Beit She'an 0
The hosts failed to break through the Beit She'an defenses at Teddy Stadium during the first half, but in the second it was a different story entirely, as wave after wave of Jerusalem attack threatened the Beit She'an goal.

Ehud Kahila broke the deadlock when he drilled home a ball from close range from an Itzik Zohar corner in the 56th minute. Eli Ohana then made it 2-0 four minutes later when he picked up a David Amsalem ball from the left. Zohar added one of his own on 62 minutes and Ohana completed

the rout 20 minutes from the end.
Maccabi Tel Aviv 3
Hapoel Tel Aviv 0

The derby clash at the National Stadium was a pale rendition of what a true major Tel Aviv derby should be like. Maccabi are not at their best, while Hapoel are practically doomed, lurking in the relegation mire.

Maccabi did not play well, but did barely enough to justify their

semifinal berth as Hapoel 'keeper Shavit Elimelech faltered in goal.

Offer Mizrahi scored twice in the first half (35th and 43rd minutes). Both were strikes which Elimelech should have been able to do better at keeping out. Avi Nimni added a third goal on 70 minutes just for good measure.

Bnei Yehuda 1
Maccabi Haifa 0
Alon Mizrahi's lone strike after

30 minutes was all that was needed to finally bury Haifa's season. With no more than a mid-table finish awaiting, their hopes of a European berth were dumped in an uneventful match which took place on a very poor playing surface at Bnei Yehuda's Hatikva Quarter ground.

Hapoel Beersheba 0
Hapoel Kfar Sava 0
(after extra time, Beersheba won 5-3 on penalties)

This game would probably have remained goalless even if the sides had continued playing for another 120 minutes.

Only the sudden, accidental switching on of the sprinkler system during play broke the 5,000 crowd's boredom.

Beersheba, second in the National League standings, did not disappoint their fans, however. When the crunch came, they put all five penalties into the net: Shai Holtzman, Ilan Vaknin, Gadi Hazut, Giovanni Rosso and Shimon Biton all hitting the target.

Kfar Sava's first three attempts - by Yaniv Abarjil, Francisco Washington and Tamir Netzer - all went in, but Ofer Cohen booted the ball sky high over the goal, leaving veteran Biton with the job of wrapping up the match for Beersheba.

Youth team faces Yugoslavia

Israel's national youth soccer squad take on their Yugoslavian counterparts this morning in Holon in the second-leg qualifier for a place in the European Championship finals to be held in Iceland later this year.

The Yugoslavians have a narrow 3-2 edge from the first leg encounter played on their home soil three weeks ago.

Thanks to the two vital away goals clinched in that meeting by Alon Kaplan and Yossi Ben-Ayoun, Israel's exciting youth team has a marvelous opportunity of reaching the finals of the competition for the first time. The Israelis will need to take special precautions in order to neutralize Paris St. Germain's Marko Pantalic who found the net twice in Yugoslavia, and remains the most effective weapon in the visitors' arsenal.

In order to give his players an opportunity to diffuse some of the tension and pressure surrounding today's fixture, coach Ze'ev Zeltzer took the unusual step of taking them out for a leisurely stroll in Ramat Gan's National Park yesterday. The game kicks off at 7 p.m. and will be broadcast live on Channel 1.

Derek Fattal

Bruins, Caps out of Stanley Cup playoffs

NEW YORK (AP) - What a way to end.

The NHL's leader tumbled to a team that hasn't made the postseason in four years.

And mighty Mario Lemieux, the scoring leader for the final time, couldn't buy a goal in a game against the worst team in the league.

It was an atypical conclusion to a season that already had some atypical results.

For the first time in 30 years, Boston will be absent when the playoffs begin today. So will Washington, its 14-year postseason streak snapped.

Look for debuts by the Mighty Ducks - on home ice, no less - and the Ottawa Senators, who fought off three other Eastern Conference teams trying to claim one of the bottom berths.

Bruins fans, who may have forgotten how to cheer the home team, reserved their loudest ovations for the soon-to-retire Lemieux as Boston defeated the Penguins 7-3 on Sunday, the end of the NHL's regular season.

In his last appearance in the city

where he played his first NHL game, Lemieux didn't get a goal, but he did add two assists to a points total that made him the league's leading scorer for the sixth time. In 76 games, Lemieux had 50 goals and 72 assists for 122 points.

Phoenix's Keith Tkachuk had the most goals (52), while the New York Rangers' Wayne Gretzky tied Lemieux for the league lead in assists.

Lemieux, Tkachuk, Anaheim's Teemu Selanne (51) and Philadelphia's John LeClair (50) were this season's only 50-goal scorers, the first full season since 1992 with so few. For all but Selanne, it was the second 50-goal season in a row.

In goal, New Jersey's Martin Brodeur - the 1994 rookie of the year - had another award-winning year with a goals-against average of 1.88, the league's best since Tony Esposito's 1.77 in 1971-72.

Familiar names led the team standings as well. Defending Stanley Cup champions Colorado clinched the Western Conference title, while the East went to the 1995 Cup winner, New Jersey.

After that, things were less predictable. This year's Central Division winner, Dallas, came in last in '96. The Stars wrapped up the division title Wednesday with a 5-4 victory over the Islanders.

Buffalo, which finished next-to-last in the Northeast Division last year, this year took the division title, thanks mainly to goalie Dominik Hasek, who had the league's highest save percentage at .930.

Chicago was in third place in the West last year, but struggled this season until a trade in January that

sent unhappy goaltender Ed Belfour to San Jose for three role players. The Blackhawks didn't clinch a playoff spot until they defeated Calgary 7-3 Friday in their next-to-last game.

Ottawa, which never made the playoffs in its previous four seasons, earned the East's seventh seed in a last-minute scramble.

The Senators went 10-4-2 down the stretch, ending with three straight wins. They would have been eliminated by a loss in any of those three games.

Anaheim, another first-time postseason player, not only got to the playoffs, but earned third place in the West and home ice vs. Phoenix in the opening round.

Stanley Cup Playoffs
FIRST ROUND (Best-of-7)
Today: St. Louis at Detroit, Edmonton at Dallas, Chicago at Colorado, Phoenix at Anaheim. Tomorrow: Montreal at New Jersey, Ottawa at Buffalo, Pittsburgh at Philadelphia, New York at Florida.

NHL Scoring Leaders				
Player	GP	G	A	Pts
Lemieux, PIT	76	50	72	122
Selanne, ANA	76	51	58	109
Kariya, ANA	69	44	69	113
LeClair, PHI	69	50	47	97
Gretzky, NYR	82	25	72	97
Jagr, PIT	63	47	48	95
Sundin, TOR	82	41	53	94
Patry, NYI	80	48	42	90
Francis, PIT	81	27	63	90
Shanahan, DET	81	47	41	88
Tkachuk, PHO	81	52	34	86
Forberg, COL	66	28	58	86
Turgeon, STL	73	28	58	86
Yzerman, DET	81	22	63	85
Messier, NYR	71	36	48	84
Modano, DAL	80	35	48	83
Hull, STL	80	35	48	83
Chelios, BOS	80	22	60	82
Gilmour, NJ	81	22	60	82
Weight, EDM	80	21	61	82
D-House, MON	82	27	54	81
Reed, MON	82	27	54	81
Undruss, PHI	82	32	47	79
Leach, NYR	82	20	58	78

*began season with different team

Sizzling Iverson can't lift 76ers

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - Allen Iverson scored 40 points, giving him five straight games with at least 40, but the Washington Bullets countered with their highest point total of the season for a 131-110 victory over the 76ers on Monday night.

The Bullets took a one-game lead over Cleveland in the race for the eighth and final playoff spot in the East. The Cavs lost 94-82 at Charlotte.

Iverson's 40-point performance didn't come without a little controversy. The 76ers called timeout with about 25 seconds left to set up a play for Iverson, and the Bullets stepped aside and let Iverson take an uncontested 3-pointer with 19.6 seconds left to reach 40 points.

Magic 100, Pistons 91
Penny Hardaway scored 21 points and host Orlando got a late lift from Gerald Wilkins and Darrell Armstrong to clinch the seventh playoff spot in the East.

The Magic rallied from a 16-point deficit, took their first lead early in the fourth quarter and gradually pulled away while holding Detroit to 15 points in the final 12 minutes.

Hornets 94, Cavaliers 82
Glen Rice scored 25 points and host Charlotte tied a club record with its eighth straight win.

The Hornets moved a game ahead of Detroit in the race for the fifth playoff seed in the East.

Bulls 117, Raptors 100

Michael Jordan had his first triple-double since coming out of retirement 25 months ago as Chicago posted its 69th victory of the season.

Jordan had 30 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists to finish in double-digits in each category for the 27th time in his career and first in a regular-season game since December 1992.

Clippers 99, Mavericks 93
Visiting Los Angeles clinched its first playoff berth since the 1992-93 season.

The Clippers, who will open the postseason at Utah, eliminated Sacramento and wrapped up the eighth and final Western Conference playoff spot. They will be in the playoffs for the 3rd time in their 12 seasons in Los Angeles.

Derrick Martin scored 21 points. Malik Sealy added 15, Loy Vaughn had 14 points and 15 rebounds and Brent Barry added 14 points for the Clippers.

Pacers 110, Knicks 107 (OT)
Host Indiana avoided being eliminated from the playoff race as Dale Davis had 23 points and 18 rebounds.

Patrick Ewing was ejected for picking up two technical fouls.

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division	W	L	Pct	GB
y-Miami	59	20	.747	-
x-New York	54	25	.684	5
x-Orlando	45	34	.570	14
Washington	41	38	.519	18
New Jersey	24	54	.308	34 1/2
Philadelphia	21	58	.266	38
Boston	14	65	.177	45
Central Division	W	L	Pct	GB
z-Chicago	69	11	.863	-
x-Atlanta	54	24	.692	14
x-Charlotte	53	26	.671	15 1/2
x-Detroit	52	27	.658	16 1/2
Cleveland	40	39	.506	28 1/2
Indiana	39	40	.494	29 1/2
Milwaukee	31	47	.397	37
Toronto	28	51	.354	40 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
z-Utah	60	18	.769	-
x-Houston	54	25	.684	6 1/2
x-Minnesota	39	40	.494	23 1/2
Dallas	23	56	.291	37 1/2
San Antonio	20	59	.253	40 1/2
Vancouver	13	59	.218	48
Pacific Division	W	L	Pct	GB
x-LA Lakers	54	25	.684	-
x-Seattle	54	25	.684	-
x-Portland	46	33	.582	8
x-Phoenix	39	40	.494	15
x-LA Clippers	36	43	.456	18
Sacramento	33	46	.415	21 1/2
Golden State	30	50	.375	24 1/2

z-clinched conference title, y-clinched division title, x-clinched playoff berth

MONDAY'S RESULTS: Washington 131, Philadelphia 110; Orlando 100, Detroit 91; Minnesota 95, Miami 87; Charlotte 94, Cleveland 82; Indiana 110, New York 107 (OT); Chicago 117, Toronto 100; LA Clippers 99, Dallas 93; Golden State 103, Denver 93; Sacramento 120, San Antonio 106.

SCOREBOARD

MONDAY'S NL RESULTS: Houston 4, St. Louis 2 (10); Colorado 18, Montreal 8; San Francisco 3, NY 2; Atlanta 15, Cincinnati 5.
MONDAY'S AL RESULTS: Boston 10, Oakland 1; Milwaukee 7, Detroit 0; Seattle 6, Cleveland 1; Kansas City 3, Toronto 2; Baltimore 4, Minnesota 2; Anaheim 5, NY Yankees 1; Texas 3, Chicago White Sox 1.
AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL: Port Adelaide 18.21 (129) def. Kilda 14.6 (90), West Bulldogs 16.9 (105) def. Richmond 12.14 (86), St. Melbourne 14.7 (91).

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Bahia	02	36	11	52	partly
Batavia	21	70	32	90	partly
Bombay	11	52	34	75	partly
Buenos Aires	21	70	32	90	partly
Chicago	09	48	13	55	cloudy
Colon	01	34	12	54	cloudy
Frankfurt	09	48	13	55	cloudy
Hankow	05	41	13	55	cloudy
Hong Kong	04	39	13	55	cloudy
Kobe	04	39	13	55	cloudy
London	24	75	28	82	clear
Lyons	13	55	23	84	clear
Manila	09	48	13	55	cloudy
Medan	09	48	13	55	cloudy
Montreal	06	21	10	43	partly
Moscow	07	45	10	43	partly
New York	04	39	13	55	cloudy
Peking	07	45	13	55	cloudy
Perth	05	41	17	63	partly
Rangoon	02	36	10	43	partly
Singapore	02	36	10	43	partly
Sydney	12	54	13	55	cloudy
Tientsin	18	64	13	55	cloudy
Tokyo	01	34	09	48	clear
Vienna	02	36	09	48	clear
Yokohama	01	34	11	52	partly

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